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ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF VEDIC PHILOSOPHY

P.R.P. SHARMA

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Contrary to the popular perception that Indian civilization has been largely concerned with the affairs of the spirit and "after-life", India's historical record suggests that some of the greatest Indian minds were much more concerned with developing philosophical paradigms that were grounded in reality. This book as an introduction to Vedic philosophy. It is introductory in two ways. First, it presupposes, on the part of its readers, no prior acquaintance with the subject. It should be capable of being understood without any such acquaintance. Second, it begins, not with the discussion of particulars problems, but with an account of the general nature of philosophy.

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लेखक Sharma, P.R.P.
शीर्षक Encyclopaedia of Vedic Philosophy

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कृपया पुस्तक के ऊपर कोई निशान आदि न लगायें।

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Encyclopaedia of Vedic Philosophy

Dr. P.R.P. Sharma

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PREFACE

Contrary to the popular perception that Indian civilization has been largely concerned with the affairs of the spirit and "after-life", India's historical record suggests that some of the greatest Indian minds were much more concerned with developing philosophical paradigms that were grounded in reality. The premise that Vedic philosophy is founded solely on mysticism and renunciation emanates from a colonial and orientalist world view that seeks to obfuscate a rich tradition of scientific thought and analysis in India. Amongst those Indian philosophers who accepted the separation of mind and body and argued for the existence of the soul, there was considerable dedication to the scientific method and to developing the principles of deductive and inductive logic. The philosophers of the Sankhya school, the Nyaya-Vaisesika schools scholars made substantial contributions to the growth of science and learning. Advances in the applied sciences like metallurgy, textile production and dyeing were also made. In particular, the rational period produced some of the most fascinating series of debates on what constitutes the "scientific method": How does one separate our sensory perceptions from dreams and hallucinations? When does an observation of reality become accepted as fact, and as scientific truth? How should the principles of inductive and deductive logic be developed and applied? How does one evaluate a hypothesis for its scientific merit? What is a valid inference? What constitutes a scientific proof?

These and other questions were attacked with an unexpected intellectual vigour. As keen observers of nature and the human body, India's early scientist/philosophers studied human sensory organs, analyzed dreams, memory and consciousness. The best of them understood dialectics in nature - they understood change, both in quantitative and qualitative terms—they even posited a proto-type of the modern atomic theory. It was this rational foundation that led to the flowering of Indian civilization. The science of Ayurveda-(the ancient Indian system of healing) blossomed in this period. Medical practitioners took up the dissection of corpses, practiced surgery, developed popular nutritional guides, and wrote out codes for medical procedures and patient care and diagnosis.

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"I describe this book as an introduction to Vedic philosophy. It is introductory in two ways. First, it presupposes, on the part of its readers, no prior acquaintance with the subject. It should be capable of being understood without any such acquaintance. Second, it begins, not with the discussion of particulars problems, but with an account of the general nature of philosophy, as, in common with many other philosophers of our period, I conceive of and try to practice it.

The book, then, may fairly be described as introductory. But, though introductory, it is not elementary. There is no such thing as elementary philosophy. There is no shallow end to the philosophical pool.

—Dr. P.R.P. Sharma

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VEDIC PHILOSOPHY

The *Vedas* are the main scriptural texts of Hinduism, also known as the Sanatana Dharma, and are a large corpus of texts originating in Ancient India. The Vedas, regarded as *Aaruti* ("that which is heard"), form part of an oral tradition in the form of an ancient teacher-disciple tradition. As per Hindu tradition the Vedas were 'revealed' to the Rishis referred to in the texts, not composed or written by them. Even though many historians have tried to affix dates to the Vedas there is as yet no common consensus as there is for the scriptures of other religions.

The Vedas are arguably the oldest surviving scriptures in the world. The Vedanta and Mimamsa schools of Hindu philosophy assert that the Vedas are apaurusheya ("unauthored"), that is, they have neither human nor divine origin, and are eternal in nature. As per Hindu tradition, the sage Vedavyasa divided the Vedas into Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda at the beginning of the Kali Yuga.

Overview: The sacred books of ancient India. The Sanskrit word veda means "knowledge", more particularly "sacred book". In its widest sense the term designates not only the sacred texts, but also the voluminous theological and philosophical literature attached thereto, the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, and Sutras. But usually the term veda applies only to the four collections (Samhitas) of hymns and prayers composed for different ritualistic purposes: the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. Of these only the first three were—originally regarded as canonical; the fourth attained to this position after a long struggle. Though differences exist in the language of the four Vedas, still there is such agreement on cardinal points as against later Sanskrit that the term Vedic, which is in common use for the oldest form of the language of India, is amply justified.

The Rigveda: The Rigveda ("Veda of verses"; from ric, or before sonants rig, "laudatory stanza") is the oldest and most important of these collections. In its present form it contains 1028 hymns (including eleven supplementary ones in the eighth book), arranged

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in ten mandalas (cycles), or books, which vary in extent, only the first and tenth being approximately equal. The poems themselves are of different authorship and date from widely different periods.

The actual date of these ancient scriptures is a nebulous topic. Yet, the description of an extremely cold climate leads some to believe that the Vedas are close to 20,000 years old, but there are some modern scholars who think that the number is exaggerated and should be about 5000. No matter what the age, it is the belief by many these texts were and are the oldest in the world. They express philosophies, realities and truths about life. The texts themselves show that the collection is the result of the work of generations of poets, extending over many centuries. Books II to VII inclusive are each the work of a single poet, or rishi (seer), and his descendants; hence they are aptly called "family books". Book III is attributed to the family of Vishvamitra, IV to that of Vamadeva, V to that of Vasishtha. The hymns in books I and X are all composed by different families. The ninth consists exclusively of hymns addressed to Soma, the deified plant, the juice of which was used for the Soma sacrifice. Books II to VII are the oldest, and book X the most recent, in point of origin.

Hymns to the same deity are usually grouped together. Thus, approximately 500 hymns are addressed to two gods alone: Indra, the god of lightning and storms, and Agni, the god of fire. The term god is actually false, the "gods" (devas) being only highly, elevated prophets, angels, or phenomenons. The Vedas clearly state that there is only one God, the same as Jews, Muslims, Christians belief alike. One Vedic missionary is the Arya Samaj, its churches are located all over the world, especially in India, the USA, and can teach those who search the Vedas.

The element of nature-worship is a marked feature in most of the hymns, which are invocations of different deities. The value of the great collection as presenting the earliest record of the mythology of an Indo-European people is apparent. Several of the gods go back to the time of Indo-Iranian unity, *e.g.* Yama (the Avestan Yima), Soma (haoma), Mitra (the later Persian Mithra). Some of the divinities, especially the higher ones, still exhibit the attributes which enable us to trace their origin to the personification of natural phenomena.

Thus Indra personified thunder, Agni fire, Varuna the sea, Surya the sun, Ushas the dawn, the Maruts the storm, and others were of a somewhat similar character. Indra was the favourite god of the Vedic Aryans; almost one fourth of all the hymns in the Rigveda are addressed to him and they are among the best in the collection. Next to Indra stands Agni. Many hymns are in honour of Soma. Other gods invoked are the two Ashins, somewhat resembling the Diocsuri of ancient Greece, the terrible Rudra, Parjanya the rain-god, Vayu the wind-god, Surya the sun-god, Pushan the protector of roads and stray kine. Prayers are also addressed to groups of divinities like the Adityas and the Vishve Devas (all the gods). Only a few hymns sing the praise of Vishnu and of Shiva in his earlier form as Rudra, though these two deities became later the chief gods of the Hindu pantheon.

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Goddesses play a small part, only Ushas, the goddess of dawn, has some twenty hymns in her honour; these poems are of exceptional literary merit.

The number of secular hymns are small, but many of them are of particular interest. They are of various content. In one (book X, 34) a gambler laments his ill luck at dice and deplores the evil passion that holds him in his grasp. In the same book (X, 18) there occurs a funeral hymn, from which important information may be gained concerning the funeral rites of the Vedic age. Evidently cremation was most in vogue, though burial was also resorted to. There are also some riddles and incantations or prayers exactly like those in the Atharvaveda. Historical references are occasionally found in the so-called danastutis (praises of gifts), which in most cases are not independent poems, but laudatory stanzas appended to some ordinary hymn, and in which the poet gives thanks for generosity shown to him by some prince. Some six or seven hymns deal with cosmogonic speculations.

It is significant that some of the hymns, chiefly in book X, are cast in the form of a dialogue. Here we may possibly discern the beginnings of the Sanskrit drama. The poetry of the Rigveda is neither popular nor primitive, as it has been erroneously considered, but is the production of a refined sacerdotal class and the result of a long period of cultural development. It was intended primarily for use in connection with the Soma sacrifice, and to accompany a ritual, which, though not so complicated as at the time of the Brahmanas, was far from simple. The Rigveda has come down to us in only one recession, that of the Shakala school. Originally there were several schools: The "Mahabhashya" (great commentary), about the second century B.C., knows of twenty-one, while some later writings know of two only. In these schools the transmission of the hymns was most carefully attended to; a most elaborate mnemonic system was devised to guard against any changes in the sacred text, which has thus come down to us practically without variants.

Editions of the Rigveda were published by Max Muller, "Rigveda-Samhita with the Commentary of Sayancharya" (6 vols., London, 1849-74; 2nd ed., 4 vols., 1890-95); "The Hymns of the Rigveda in the Samhita and Pada Texts" (2nd ed., 2 vols., London, 1877); Aufrecht, "Samhita Text", in Roman characters (2nd ed., Bonn, 1877); selections in Lanman's "Sanskrit Reader" (Boston, 1884); Bothlingk, "Sanskrit-Chrestomathie" (3rd ed., Leipzig, 1897); Windisch, "Zwolf Hymnen des Rigveda", with Sayana's commentary (Leipzig, 1883). Translations were made into: English verse by Griffith (2 vols., Benares, 1896-97); selections in prose by Max Muller in "Sacred Books of the East", XXXII (Oxford, 1891); continued by Oldenburg, ibidem, XLVI (1897); German verse by Grassmann (2 vols., Leipzig, 1876-77); German prose by Ludwig (6 vols., Prague, 1876-88). On the Rigveda in general see: Kaegi, "The Rigveda", tr. Arrowsmith (Boston, 1886); Odenberg, "Rigveda", books I-Vi in "Göttinger Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften", new series, XI (Berlin, 1909).

Righteousness (Dharma) in the Rugveda : The Vedic sages created the institution of sacrificial fires (yadnya) as the point of union of God and man, on the earth. Later that very institution became the central focus of the spread of Vedic culture (sanskruti). A

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sacrificial fire is the very core of social life and the formation of social organisations. According to the Vedic sages The Supreme God exists in the form of a sacrificial fire. Performing sacrificial fires was Their sole code of Righteousness. Somyag is a sacrifice which is accorded the central focus in the Rigveda. Som represents vision and fire symbolises light. It is because of the sun and the rain that all living beings survive. Food too is generated from them. This being the attitude of Vedic sages towards sacrificial fires They linked every important action of life to them.'

The Samaveda: The Samaveda ("Veda of chants") consists of 1549 stanzas, taken entirely (except 75) from the Rigveda, chiefly from books VIII and IX. Its purpose was purely practical, to serve as a textbook for the udgatar or priest who attended the Soma sacrifice. The arrangement of the verses is determined solely by their relation to the rites attending this function. The hymns were to be sung according to certain fixed melodies; hence the name of the collection. Though only two recensions are known, the number of schools for the veda is known to have been very large. The Samaveda was edited: (with German tr.) by Benfey (Leipzig, 1848); by Satyavrata Samashrami in Bibl. Ind. (Calcutta, 1873); Engl. tr. by Griffith (Benares, 1893).

The Yajurveda: The Yajurveda ("Veda of sacrificial prayers") consists also largely of verses borrowed from the Rigveda. Its purpose was also practical, but, unlike the Samaveda, it was compiled to apply to the entire sacrificial rite, not merely the Soma offering. There are two recensions of this Veda known as the "Black" and "White" Yajurveda. The origin and meaning of these designations are not clear. The White Yajurveda contains only the verses and sayings necessary for the sacrifice, while explanations exist in a separate work; the Black incorporates explanations and directions in the work itself, often immediately following the verses. Of the black there are again four recensions, all showing the same arrangement, but differing in many other respects, notably in matters of phonology and accent. By the Hindus the Yajurveda was regarded as the most important of all the Vedas for the practice of the sacrificial rites. The four recensions of the Yajurveda have been separately edited: (1) "Vajasaneyi Samhita" by Weber (London and Berlin, 1852), tr. Griffith (Benares, 1899); (2) "Taittiriya S." by Weber in "Indische Studien", XI, XII (Berlin, 1871-72); (3) "Maitrayani S." by von Schroeder (Leipzig, 1881-86); (4) "Kathaka S." by von Schroeder (Leipzig, 1900-09).

The Artharvana-Veda: The Artharva-Veda ("Veda of the atharvans or fire priests") differs widely from the other Vedas in that it is not essentially religious in character and not connected with the ritual of the Soma sacrifice. It consists chiefly of a variety of spells and incantations, intended to curse as well as to bless. There are charms against enemies, demons, wizards, harmful animals like snakes, against sickness of man or beast, against the oppressors of Brahmans. But there are also charms of a positive character to obtain benefits, to insure love, happy family-life, health and longevity, protection on journeys, even luck in gambling. Superstitions from primitive ages were evidently current among the masses. To some of the spells remarkably close parallels can be adduced from Germanic

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and Slavic antiquity. The Atharvana-Veda is preserved in two recensions, which, though differing in content and arrangement, are of equal extent, comprising 730 hymns and about 6000 stanzas, distributed in twenty books. Many of the verses are taken from the Rigveda without change; a considerable part of the sayings is in prose. The books are of different age; the first thirteen are the oldest, the last two are late additions. Book XX, consisting entirely of hymns in praise of Indra, all taken from the Rigveda, was undoubtedly added to give the Atharvana's connection with the sacrificial ceremonial and thus to insure its recognition as a canonical book. But this recognition was attained only after a considerable lapse of time, and after the period of the Rigveda.

In the "Mahabharata" the canonical character of the Atharvana is distinctly recognized, references to the four Vedas being frequent. Though as a whole this collection must have come into existence later than the Rigveda, much of its material is fully as old and perhaps older. For the history of religion and civilization it is a document of priceless value. The Atharvana-Veda has been edited by Roth and Whitney (berlin, 1856); Engl. tr. in verse by Griffith (2 vols., Benares, 1897); prose by Bloomfield in "Sacred Books of the East", XLII; by Whitney, revised by Lanman (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass, 1905). Consult Bloomfield, "The Atharaveda" in "Grundriss der Indoarischen Philologie", II (Strasburg, 1899).

Organization: The Mantras are collected into anthologies called Samhitas. There are four Samhitas: the *Rk* (poetry), *Saman* (song), *Yajus* (prayer), and *Atharvan* (a kind of priest). They are commonly referred to as the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda respectively. Each Samhita is preserved in a number of versions or recensions (*shakhas*), the differences among them being minor, except in the case of the Yajurveda, where two "White" (*shukla*) recensions contain the Mantras only, while four "Black" (*krishna*) recensions interspersed the Brahmana parts among the Mantras.

The Rigveda contains the oldest part of the corpus, and consists of 1028 hymns. The Samaveda is mostly a rearrangement of the Rigveda for musical rendering. The Yajurveda gives sacrificial prayers and the Atharvaveda gives charms, incantations and magical formulae. In addition to these there are some stray secular material, such as legends.

The next category of texts are the Brahmanas. These are ritual texts that describe in detail the sacrifices in which the Mantras were to be used, as well as comment on the meaning of the sacrificial ritual. Each of the Brahmanas is associated with one of the Samhitas. The Brahmanas may either form separate texts, or in the case of the Black Yajurveda, can be partly integrated into the text of the Samhita. The most important of the Brahmanas is the Shatapatha Brahmana of the White Yajurveda.

The Aranyakas and Upanishads are theological and philosophical works. They are mystic or spiritual interpretations of the Vedas, and are considered their putative end and essence, and thus known as Vedanta ("the end of the Vedas"). They often form part of the Brahmanas (*e.g.* the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad). They are the basis of the Vedanta school of Darsana.

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Position and Compilation: Hindu tradition regards the Vedas as shruti: uncreated, eternal and being revealed to sages (rishis). The rishi Krishna Dwaipayana, better known as Veda Vyasa – "Vyasa" meaning "editor" or "compiler" – reputedly distributed this mass of hymns into the four books of the Vedas, each book being supervised by one of his disciples. Paila arranged the hymns of the Rigveda. Those that were chanted during religious and social ceremonies were compiled by Vaishampayana under the title *Yajus mantra Samhita* (see Yajurveda). Jaimini is said to have collected hymns that were set to music and melody — "Saman" (see *Samaveda*). The fourth collection of hymns and chants known as the *Atharva Samhita* was collated by Sumanta.

Philosophies and sects that developed in the Indian subcontinent have taken differing positions on the Vedas. In Buddhism and Jainism, the authority of the Veda is repudiated, and both evolved into separate religions. The sects which did not explicitly reject the Vedas remained followers of the Sanatana Dharma, which is known in modern times as Hinduism.

'Vedic Shakhas and their Geographical Distribution'

Shakha	*Samhita*	*Brahmana*	*Aranyaka*	*Upanishad*
Shakala RV	Oral and Printed	Printed (=Aitareya Brahmana) and Oral	Printed (Aitareya Aranyaka) and Oral	Printed (Aitareya Upanishad) and Oral
Bashkala RV	Manuscript exists with accents and Padapatha.	-	-	-
Shankhayana RV	Manuscript exists with accents and Padapatha.	Printed (= Shankhayana Brahmana)	Printed (= Shankhyana Aranyaka)	Printed as a part of the Aranyaka
Kaushitaki RV	X	Printed (=Kaushitaki Brahmana) and Oral	Manuscript exists	Printed (=Kaushitaki Upanishad)
Ashvalayana RV	Manuscript exists, with accents and Padapatha.	Same as Shakala	Same as Shakala shakha	Same as Shakala shakha
Paingi RV	X	Manuscript might exist	'Rahashya Brahmana' lost.	X
Madhyandina YV	Oral and Printed	Oral and Printed (Madhyandina Shata-patha) with accents.	Oral and Printed (= Shatapatha XIV.1-8) with accents,	Oral and Printed (= Brihadaranyaka Upanishad = Shatapatha XIV. 3-8) with accents.
Kanva YV	Oral and Printed	Oral and Printed partially (=Kanva Shatapatha Brahmana) with accents.	Oral and Printed (Book XVII of Kanva Shatapatha) with accents.	Oral and Printed (with numerous commentaries, as 'Brihadaranyaka Upanishad') with accents.

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Contd...

Shakha	*Samhita*	*Brahmana*	*Aranyaka*	*Upanishad*
Katyayana YV	Manuscript (?)	Manuscript (only first 6 books, rest lost)	X	X
Taittiriya YV	Oral and Printed	Oral and Printed: =Taittiriya Br. and Vadhula Br. (part of Vadhula Srautrasutra)	Oral and Printed (=Taittiriya. Aranyaka) with accents	Oral and Printed (=Taittiriya Upanishad, Mahanarayana Upanishad) with accents.
Maitrayani YV	Oral (partial?) and Printed	Lost	Oral and Printed (=Maitrayani Aranyaka/ Upanishad) with accents.	Oral and Printed (virtually same as Aranyaka)
Kathaka YV	Printed. Accents survive only on 1/3 on the text.	Fragments printed and in manuscript)	Printed as 'Katha Aranyaka' (almost the entire text from a solitary manuscript)	Printed as Kathaka Upanishad with numerous commentaries. Katha Shiksha Upanishad also published.
Kapishthala YV	Printed (from a fragmentary manuscript. Accents left out)	Small fragment extant in manuscript	X	X
Charaka	Manuscript exists (?)	Lost	In Manuscript	X
Kauthuma SV	Samhita and Samans printed/ recorded	Printed (8 Brahmanas in all). Accents lost long back.	None. The Samhita itself has the 'Aranyaka'.	The famous Chhandogya Upanishad with numerous commentaries
Ranayaniya SV	Manuscripts of Samhita exist. Samans recorded but not printed	Same as Kauthuma with minor differences.	None. The Samhita itself has the 'Aranyaka'.	Same as Kauthuma.
Jaiminiya/ Talavakara SV	Samhita published. Two distinct styles of Saman recitation, partially recorded and published.	Brahmana published (without accents) – Jaiminiya Brahmana, Arsheya Brahmana	Tamil Nadu version of Talavakara Aranyaka (=Jaiminiya Up. Brahmana) published.	Famous Kena Upanishad
Shatyayana SV	X (traditions might be similar to Jaminiya SV)	Manuscript	X	X

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Shakha	*Samhita*	*Brahmana*	*Aranyaka*	*Upanishad*
Paippalada AV	Two versions: Kashmirian (published) and Orissan (partly published, in manuscript, unaccented)	Lost	X	Famous Prashna Upanishad, Sharabha Upanishad etc. – all published.
Shaunaka AV	Printed and Oral traditions alive	Fragmentary Gopatha Brahmana (extant and published). No accents.	X	Mundaka Upanishad published.

Study: Elaborate methods for preserving the text (memorizing by heart instead of writing), subsidiary disciplines (Vedanga), exegetical literature, etc., were developed in the Vedic schools. Sayana, from the 14th century, is known for his elaborate commentaries on the Vedic texts. While much evidence suggests that everyone was equally allowed to study the Vedas and many Vedic "authors" were women, the later dharmashastras, from the Sutra age, dictate that women and Shudras were neither required nor allowed to study the Veda. These dharmashastras regard the study of the Vedas a religious duty of the three upper varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas). In modern times, Vedic studies are crucial in the understanding of Indo-European linguistics, as well as ancient Indian history.

Many forms of Hinduism encourage the Vedic mantras to be interpreted as liberally and as philosophically as possible, unlike the texts of the three Abrahamic religions. In fact, over-literal interpretation of the mantras is actually discouraged, and even the three layers of commentaries (Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads), which form an integral part of the Aaruti literature, interpret the seemingly polytheistic, ritualistic, and highly complex Samhitas in a philosophical and metaphorical way to explain the "hidden" concepts of God (Ishwara), the Supreme Being (Brahman) and the soul or the self (Atman). Many Hindus believe that the very sound of the Vedic mantras is purifying for the environment and the human mind. Each may contain a thousand layers of meaning.

Cosmogony: The Vedic view of the world and cosmogony sees one true divine principle self-projecting as the divine word, *Vaak*, 'birthing' the cosmos that we know from 'Hiranyagarbha' or Golden Womb, a primordial sun figure that is equivalent to Surya. The varied gods like Vayu, Indra, Rudra (the Destroyer), Agni (Fire, the sacrifical medium) and the goddess Saraswati (the Divine Word, or Vaak) are just some examples of the myriad aspects of the one underlying nature of the universe.

The word Veda is often derived from 5 roots these days:

- *Vid Jnaane:* To know
- *Vid Sattaayaam*: To be, to endure

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- *Vid Labhe*: To obtain
- *Vid Vichaarane*: To consider
- *Vid Chetanaakhyaananiveseshu*: To feel, to tell, to dwell

To these roots is added the suffix 'ghaw' according to Ashtadhyayi 3.3.19, the celebrated text of Sanskrit grammar of Panini. Accordingly, the word Veda means 'the means by which, or in which all persons know, acquire mastery in, deliberate over the various lores or live or subsist upon them.'

Traditionally, the Vedic literature as such signifies a vast body of sacred and esoteric knowledge concerning eternal spiritual truths revealed to sages (Rishis) during intense meditation. They have been accorded the position of revealed scriptures and are revered in Hindu religious tradition. Over the millennia the Vedas have been handed over generation to generation by oral tradition and hence the name "shruti" or "that which is heard". According to tradition they are unauthorised (apaurusheya) and eternal.

The Vedic literature is also called by several other names –

- *Nigama*: Traditional wisdom transmitted from generation to generation
- *Amnaaya*: The root texts or primordial texts of (Hindu) tradition
- *Trayi*: The Vedic texts comprising of Versified mantras, prose mantras, and melodies.

Dating: The Hindus fundamental belief is that the Vedas are sanatan-eternal-and apaurusheya-not composed by human entity. At the beginning of every cosmic cycle of Brahma, Paramatma utters the divine words. Later, at various periods great rishis perceive these divine words and imparted this knowledge orally through generations. It is believed that this Vedic knowledge totally disappeared at the end of Brahmas cosmic cycle and reappeared again in Brahma's next cycle of creation. Later a part of vedic knowledge was written. Maha Rishi Veda Vyas simplified this one Veda by dividing it into four: Rig, Sam, Yajur, Atharva. In Bharatvarshas true tradition the vedas are eternal. In the light of these beliefs, the historical dating of these texts is a concept foreign to Hinduism and the province of secular (academic) philology.

Many historians regard the samhitas as one of the oldest oral traditions. The newest parts of the Vedas are estimated to date to around 500 BC; the oldest text (Rugveda) may be assumed to have been completed orally by 1500 BC after being composed over hundreds of years, but most Indologists agree that a long oral tradition possibly existed before it was written down by the second century B.C. Some parts of the Rigveda as well as the other Vedas are written in Sanskrit.

Some writers have used astronomical references in the Rigveda to date it to as early as the 4th millennium BC. This astronomical evidence has often been claimed to support the out of India theory in relation to origins of the Indo-European languages.

Etymology: The word "veda" means "knowledge", and is derived from the root "vid", Sanskrit for "know", reconstructed as being derived from the Proto-Indo-European root

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"weid-", meaning "see" or "know". "Weid-" is also the source of the English word "wit", as well as "vision" through Latin. The Czech and Slovak words for "science" are "vìda" resp. "veda", derived from western Slavic "vìdet" resp. "vedie" for "know".

Upavedas: The Upavedas are derived from the Vedas and are specific applications of the teachings of the Vedas. The main Upavedas are:

1. *Ayurveda:* Indian healing system, it lays more stress on living with nature instead of fighting it, hence preventive instead of corrective medicine.
2. *Dhanur Veda:* Martial arts.

   Ayurveda and Dhanurveda have points in common. They both work with Marma, or natural Pran (Life Energy) that flows in the body. Ayurveda heals the body, while Dhanurveda is used for defending the body. This concept is also known to Chinese as Acupuncture and related Chinese Martial Arts.
3. *Stahapatya Veda:* Architecture, sculpture and geomancy. Used especially for Temple design.
4. *Gandharv Veda:* Music, poetry and dance.

Some other fields like Jyotish (Indian Astrology), Tantra (based on the Puranas, which are in turn based on Vedas), Shiksha and Vyakara (Grammar and pronunciation) are also based on the Vedas.

The Six Schools of Vedic Philosophy

1. *Nyaya:* The Logical School, founded by Gautama
2. *Vaishesika:* Atomic school, founded by Kannada
3. *Samkhya:* Cosmic Principle School, founded by Kapila
4. *Yoga:* Yoga school (includes Raj, Hatha, Kundalini, and Tantra Yoga), supposedly founded by Hiranyagarbha, although the Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, and Hatha Yoga Pradipika are the most popular treatises that have survived.
5. *Mimamsa (also Purva Mimamsa):* Ritualistic School, founded by Jamini
6. *Vedant (also Uttara Mimasa):* Theological School, founded by Badarayana.

Vedanta was made popular by Adi Shankara also called Shankaracharya, who founded the Swami Order of Monks, and established 4 schools (or Maths) in 4 parts of India to carry on teachings of the Vedas in the 7th century.

Vedic Thought

The Wonder of Reincarnation: As a river nears the ocean it looks back at its life. The virgin snows on mountain-tops that gave birth to it. The lake down below which was its nursery. The travel through mountain passes where it met its tributaries and gained adulthood. The solitude and tranquility of the forests, the singing of the birds, the lush green valleys laden with wheat, corn and rice. The adventurous ride through cities, gladly

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accepting their refuse and sometimes flooding them as if in a fit of anger. Thousands of experiences and hundreds of memories. And now its imminent merger into a bigger entity. Its losing of the shores which defined it and gave it its uniqueness.

Merging into the ocean however is just a brief stopover. The water evaporates leaving behind all its impurities in the ocean, the clouds drop snow on a different mountain-top, the snow melts and water feeds into a different river and keeps the never ending cycle going.

Might nature have fashioned the human life and for that matter every type of life in the same manner? A life force appearing in its mortal form, going through its journey, disappearing into a bigger entity and after being cleansed and rejuvenated, reappearing at a different time and at a different place in a new mortal garb. Does that somehow show us that we should revere the life force within and not indulge in worshipping the external attributes provided to it by Providence? Should this shared life force provide for a common bond between all living beings or should we let ourselves be consumed by our petty differences? And if we choose the latter, would that not be an affront to the very essence of nature?

Self Observation-I: The discovery of self is a must for experiencing depth. It comes by self-observation. The Upanishads describe a simple technique for accomplishing this. They say : deliberately divide your attention at all times so as to direct a portion of it back on yourself. Divide you, the 'person' into an 'observing I' and an 'acting or thinking I'. Within the vast array of selves of your personality, establish an awareness that only watches all the rest. By observing yourself you will realize that not YOU but IT speaks within you, moves, feels, laughs, and cries in you. This concept is enumerated in the following Upanishadic sutra:

Two birds, inseparable companions, perch on the same tree.
One eats the fruit, the other looks on.
The first bird is our individual self,
feeding on the pains and pleasures of this world;
The other is the universal Self, silently witnessing all.
The individual self, immersed in the world of change,
deluded, laments its lack of freedom.
But when it discovers God, full of dignity and power,
it is freed from all its suffering.

Our Rishis admonished; 'Be present at every breath. Do not let your attention wander for the duration of a single breath.'

Thiourea, a transcendentalist, had this to say about the concept of self-observation: 'I am conscious of the presence of a part of me, which, (as it were,) is not a part of me, but a spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it ..... When the play, (it may

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be the tragedy,) of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned.

The hallmark of Socrates philosophy was 'Know thyself'.

Discover and nurture the 'observing I', and you will find yourself to be more in command of your life!

Self Observation-II: The art of self observation is practiced by deliberately dividing your attention at all times so as to direct a portion of it back on yourself. Establishing an awareness which does nothing but observe the different selves of your personality, is by no means an easy task. In the beginning, a person forgets to keep the 'observing I' separate from the 'acting or thinking I'. The 'self observing' entity keeps merging into whichever 'I' has control over the person at a given moment. But with persistence, different identities that a person assumes become apparent to him. Through observing them, these selves lose their hold on the person. The 'self-observing' part of 'I' becomes dominant and the person detaches himself from his other identities. This process culminates in his reaching a 'partially awakened' state.

In this 'partially awakened' state, a person does everything with a feeling of awareness and with a certain degree of control. His actions are not mere automatic responses to different stimuli. A person can see himself with complete objectivity. This results in his being able to make more meaningful choices. With continued practice of 'self observation' a person ultimately reaches the highest state-the 'fully awakened' state. In this state a person sees, not only himself but everything around him with full objectivity. The base and meaningless concepts of 'I', 'mine', 'yours' etc. disappear. The constant clamor of the mind is replaced by a sense of serenity. An inner peace prevails and the person becomes 'liberated'.

George I. Gurdjieff, a noted Russian philosopher, who was also a student of Hinduism, found the practice of 'self-observation' to be the starting point of all conscious raising efforts. The concept of 'self-observation' and how to practice it, is the single most revealing gift of the Upanishads.

Self Observation-III: A lot has been written about higher consciousness. It simply means being able to see the things around you, the way they really are, and not have your perception be colored by your personal biases and prejudices. The Upanishadic way to accomplish this is by separating the 'observing I' from the 'acting or thinking I'. A good way to start practicing this technique is to just observe for a few days, your one hand do all it does during your waking hours. Then you can stretch this 'self-observation' to include different parts of your body, ultimately to include your mind. It is a long drawn out process but worth the results it produces.

There are many practical benefits that come from moving your consciousness to a higher level. Extracting and enhancing the 'observing you' from the 'rest of your personality' enables you to 'merely observe your anxieties' rather than be 'part of them'. That is a great

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way to reduce stress. Self-observation reveals to you how small a portion of your most valuable possession your emotional energy is expended wisely. People normally squander it on a host of utterly futile activities such as anxiety, purely imaginary fears, agitation and anger, and also on maintenance of an exhausting degree of muscle tension. Having discovered how wasteful you are in the use of your nervous energy, you can improve your daily life by using it wisely.

By moving to a higher level of consciousness, you can see things from other people's viewpoint. This gives you an edge in resolving minor disputes before they flare up into full-scale egotistical wars. By conserving your reservoir of emotional energies, by separating your 'self' from 'the crises in your life' and by having your perceptions devoid of any biases, your life becomes a lot simpler. The choices you make in life are more thought out. The mental equilibrium you attain calms you down. It has been said that 'awakening is the evolutionary destiny of mankind'. Why not embark on this journey now?

Man The Ultimate God: Sadhna connotes the successful achieving of a desired end. It is the instrument for the attainment of Siddhi (perfection). The first step in sadhna is the desire for liberation (mumukshutva). Man alone possesses the desire to attain perfection. The gods are already divine and the animal kingdom does not have the desire for perfection. Only man has the conscious urge to expand without limits, to reach out and touch the stars.

Based on his study of the Hindu scriptures done in India, Troy Organ, a professor of Philosophy at Ohio University, wrote, "Man is a real living, growing entity while god is an ideal being. Man and god are identical in essence, but different in form. Man is real potentiality; god is ideal fulfillment. Man is to be fulfilled as god is fulfilled, but not like god's fulfillment, for god's fulfillment is a static fulfillment — there are no possibilities in gods. Man is to be perfected beyond god, for he is to be perfected in dynamic reality. The attainment of god-realization is not the ideal goal of human life. The Upanishads claim that the Self, the Atman, not god is to be realized. Various gods demythologized are merely the symbols of the full realization of human potentialities."

Self observation leads to awakening. An Awakened man, a man who has pushed himself to the limits of possibilities, one who has achieved perfection in dynamic reality under the constraints of time and space, represents the highest value. That is why the Puranas say that the life of man is desired even by gods of heaven, since it is only through a human incarnation that final liberation can be achieved.

Our purpose on this planet is not just to populate the place and in the words of Gibran, 'to fulfil life's longing for itself', but to awaken and actualize the potentialities present only in man. And when a man attains Siddhi through Sadhna in dynamic reality, he becomes one with Brahman. He becomes the ultimate god.

Human Neurosis: Our desire to understand and rationalize the infinite with a primitive intellect is the most amazing thing about us humans. Science enables us to

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analyze and validate events happening in the material realm; it lets us observe activities and processes in a controlled environment in a lab, but to extend its application to the spiritual plane is sheer madness. How could one measure the size of something infinite with a finite length of tape? How could eye see the invisible spirit? How could an analytical intellect mired in reasoning, comprehend the divine? It is simply ego driven neurosis that makes a spiritually unhinged person to expect to observe, study and validate spiritual phenomenon with his limited intellect.

Bhakti: When the intellectual curiosity has been satiated, when there are no more questions to be asked, when all the spiritual knowledge catalogued and presented in flowery prose by the learned people has been scanned, dissected and assimilated; without the person being able to still the tidal waves of his psyche, it is then that the mental speculation gives way to the practice of 'Bhakti'. It is then that the intellect surrenders to the divine in a spirit of devotion. It is then that the man's ascent to a spiritual life begins. A person introduces an element of 'Bhakti' in his life with his very first visit to a temple. When he gets there, the person does not have to recite any prayers, he does not even have to utter a single word, for the Lord can see the devotion in his heart. Just showing up with folded hands and devotion in his heart for a *Darshan*-Darshan, which requires neither prayer nor commitment but rather is an act of being in His presence, an act that submerges the self in a striving for the infinite-stills the troubled waves of ones mind. About a visit to the temple, the poet says,

"kahne kee zaroorat nahin, aana hee bahut hai,

is dar pe tera sis jhukana hee bahut hai"

The practice of spirituality through devotion provides the necessary filter which takes the sting out of the harsh realities of human existence and makes life bearable.

Rhythms of Life: Human nature dictates that we find an anchor to build our lives around. In our desperate search we go from door to door, we bounce from person to person and we jump from coattail to coattail to find somethin stable, someone we could depend on, in times of crisis. At times we feel that we have found that person and we latch on to him. When bad times do come around, as they must, we are in a state of disbelief when we find ourselves bereft of the one person we focused our lives on, one person we centered our pride on, one person who was supposed to be our anchor. Suddenly the framework of our existence seems to be receding from us. We are left only with shattered dreams.

A person who lacks a stable anchor cannot maintain equilibrium in the face of adversity. And as we well know, human relations are all transitory. We have to find something more stable, someone who would not disappoint us in times of need. That is why we have to cultivate a consciousness in which the omnipotent Lord is the anchor. The fortieth chapter of the Yajur Ved states that we should build our lives around Him, as He is the only one who is eternal and would stand by us in every adversity. To start with, one could simply visualize the deity of Lord Krishan and chant the Hare Krishan

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Mahamantar any time he is not mentally occupied with doing something. Over time this could extend to keeping that image of the Lord in the subconscious at all times. When He rules the subconscious mind, the person is surrendered and the rhythms of life are keyed to performing His service. In the Bhagwad Gita (12.8), Lord Krishan says, "Just fix your mind upon Me, and engage all your intelligence in me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt".

Continued practice in surrendering himself enables a person to develop the consciousness capable of remembering the Lord at the time of final exit. In the Bhagwad Gita (8.5), Lord Krishan says, "Whoever at the end of his life quits his body remembering Me, attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt". Mahatma Gandhi did not suddenly think of invoking the Lord's name by saying *Hey Ram* at the time of his death. He spent his whole life with Him as his anchor. He constantly practiced keeping Him in his subconscious. And so must we....so that our faith becomes a living experience.

Arjun's Paralysis: Many scholars have studied the Bhagwad Gita and tried to provide us with an insight into the teaching of Lord Krishan. Although every chapter of Gita alludes to some aspect of our moral code, the most powerful teaching arises from Arjun's paralysis on the battlefield. Arjun's perplexity arises over the question of dharam, which as a warrior, bids him to fight in order to protect the goodness, and as a person, forbids him to kill the members of his own family, his revered teachers and dear friends. Faced with Arjun's renunciation and his inability to wage war, Lord Krishan resolves his dilemma in two parts. He reminds Arjun that: (1) he must observe his dharam and, (2) the soul survives the body. In the first instance He tells Arjun that he must perform his duty, which for a warrior is to fight the evil forces to the very end and preserve goodness. Secondly, one should not worry about death, as the soul can never be slain. Rather it sheds one body at death and takes on a new one, in birth after birth.

Further Lord Krishan says that successive rebirths may be avoided by observing your dharam with complete disregard to the fruits of your action. He exhorts Arjun to hold alike happiness and unhappiness, gain and loss, victory and defeat in pursuit of his dharam. A person need not become an ascetic to achieve liberation, but only renounce the fruits of his action, and perform his duty without caring about the results. Lord Krishan says that your entitlement is only to the action, and not to the fruit it bears.

These are the answers to Arjun's dilemma. But there is another teaching which is of the greatest importance. This is the teaching of devotion to God. Lord Krishan says that he who along with his struggle for survival, also remembers Him and adores Him, is the greatest ascetic. Steeped in this Hindu philosophy, one overcomes all obstacles in life and leads a peaceful and happy life.

The Yoga of Devotion: In the twelfth chapter of the Bhagwad Gita, Arjun enquires from Lord Krishan about the relative merits of reaching Him through devotional service versus through worshipping the impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested.

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Lord Krishan answers, "Those whose minds are fixed on me in steadfast love, worshipping me with absolute faith, I consider them to be most perfect." He further adds, "As for others who worship the unmanifest, indefinable and changeless, that which is omnipresent, constant, eternal and lies beyond the perception of the senses, and they do so by holding all the senses in check, are tranquil minded and devoted to the welfare of humanity, and see the Atman in every creature; they will also come to me."

"But the devotees of the unmanifest have a harder task, because the unmanifest is very difficult for embodied souls to realize."

Bhakti yoga, or the process of reaching Him by being in direct devotional service to the Lord is easier and natural for us humans. The individual soul is embodied since time immemorial, and it is very difficult for a common man to visualize that he is not the body and that the Lord does not have any physical attributes either. In Bhakti yoga, as described in Bhagwad Gita, a person accepts the Deity of Krishan as Brahman with body features and engages himself in devotional service to the Lord. So it becomes a very easy and natural process for him to reach the Supreme Being.

Janana yoga, or the process of reaching Him through understanding the unmanifested Supreme Being is very difficult. By his very nature, a common man has trouble identifying with the formless Supreme. However, if he is persistent in his quest, he might realize the eternal and attain spiritual realization through the guidance of a highly learned devotee. But the unguided intellectualization of the unmanifest may lead a person to become an atheist. Unfortunately a large percentage of today's intelligensia falls squarely into this category.

Bhakti Yoga, according to the Bhagwad Gita, is the shortest path to spiritual realization.

Modes of Material Nature: The last few chapters of the Bhagwad Gita enumerate the modes of material nature and the characteristics of people living under their influence.

The three modes of material nature are 'sattvaguna' or the mode of goodness, 'rajasguna' or the mode of passion, and 'tamasguna' or the mode of ignorance.

Lord Krishan says, "Sattva rules a person who offers sacrifices in accordance with scriptural instructions and does not covet their fruits. Sattoguni, or a person inspired by sattva is impelled by an inner sense of duty. The performance of sacrifices by a Rajoguni is for the outward show, in the hope of a divine reward and is inspired by rajas. The Tamogunis on the other hand, totally disregard the scriptural instructions and make no offering, no prayer of dedication, no gift to the priest and are devoid of faith."

The Lord further adds, "The austerity of the body comprises of reverence for the gods, brahmins and gurus; uprightness, physical cleanliness and sexual purity and nonviolence. Austerity of speech comprises of speech that does not hurt anyone, is truthful, kind and beneficial, as well as daily recitation of scriptures. The austerity of mind comprises serenity of mind, gentleness, self control and inner purity. The triple austerities practiced

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with the highest faith and with nary a thought of reward crossing ones mind is the nature of sattva. The austerity undertaken out of self-pride, and in order to gain the reputation and homage attendant on pious acts is of the rajas type. Austerity practiced under some foolish misconceptions, by means of self torture or to hurt another person is of the tamas type."

Clearly a satto-guni will do everything as an offering to God. Any work done in this mode shall be the result of doer's best effort and will be performed with great willpower and determination. The motive for the effort will be something higher than the next paycheck or the next promotion. Internally a person will be all fired up to perform but outwardly he would appear to be calm and unstressed as there is no passion involved in the effort. The non-attachment to rewards of ones actions is sometimes considered to suggest coldness and lack of enthusiasm. But in reality, one is freed from the fear of failure and the desire of rewards, and offers everything he does as a sacrament of devotion to his duty. Leading ones life as a satto-guni therefore, is the most spiritual and stressfree mode that one should strive to achieve.

Householder: In the Bhagwad Gita, Lord Krishan says that he who along with his struggle for survival remembers Him and chants His name is the biggest ascetic. He clearly puts a spiritually devoted householder ahead of any other group of people. This is very well illustrated by the following incident.

It is said that once Sage Narad and a common householder entered the court of Lord Krishan almost at the same time. Lord Krishan chose to see the householder first. Now Sage Narad considered himself to be the foremost devotee of the Lord. So being passed up in favor of a common householder really hurt him. So much so that when he had an audience with the Lord, he complained about this incident. The Lord decided to teach the Sage a lesson. He handed him a pot full of 'ghee' and asked him to put it on his head and to go around the world without spilling a drop of it. This, the Sage was able to accomplish without any problem. So when he came back to the Lord after going around the world, the Lord commended him on his feat and asked him as to how many times did he chant His name during the trip. The Sage said that the Lord must be really joking for he was so busy balancing the pot of ghee that he could not afford to be distracted even for a single instant. Lord Krishan told him that the house holder had to juggle a thousand responsibilities that go with being a father, a husband, a son, a brother, a breadwinner and still found time to chant His name. Sage Narad on the other hand, had only the task of balancing a pot of ghee, and could not find time to chant His name. Therefore the householder was leading a more spiritual life than the Sage. The Sage felt humbled and recognized the greatness of a householder.

Householders are the backbone of the human race. They are the ones who grow the food we eat, design and manufacture consumer goods and appliances needed to make life livable, and provide health care to get us back on our feet when we get sick. They are the ones who contribute most to the material development of society since they have a

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vested interest in seeing that their children inherit a better world than the one in which they were raised. In short a householder is the most important element of the human race and spiritual householders are the beings most loved by God.

jag to andhakaar hai, is se tu nikal...

gyan kaa prakash kar, mod tu samabhal...

Radha Krishan ke charan main nitya kar naman...

Man to mandir hai.....haridaya hai vrindavan....

Temple Rituals - A Psychological Analysis: A person's quest for spirituality starts simply with his visiting a temple. To facilitate the process of his spiritual growth, some temples require their devotees to adhere to a dress code. The temple walls are decorated with religious symbols and images. The 'puja' itself consists of singing of hymns, bhajans etc. followed by a 'parvachan' or a class on religion/spirituality; with 'Aarti' being the final offering to the gods. There is a psychological reasoning behind all this. The dress code, all the temple decorations, the aroma of incense, the fresh flowers, the nicely dressed deities on the alter; are all meant to create an atmosphere conducive to a spiritual experience. They are the first step of a process meant to alter the state of one's mind, to bring it to a state where the internal turmoil subsides for a duration. The spiritual vibrations of the temple atmosphere lift the soul to a level where it becomes capable of connecting with the divinity. It essentially prepares the person for what he has come there for.

In our everyday existence, we hide our innermost feelings and wear a shield against any intruding thoughts. Every bit of information is thoroughly screened by our rational mind before it is accepted or rejected. But if we are to learn anything from a spiritual master, the sieve has to be temporarily put away. Subliminal thoughts have to penetrate the mind in their entirety, without being filtered or diluted in any way.

The second step in creating the proper state of mind is to remove the filter separating the ears from the brain, to give our defense mechanism a rest. This is done by singing bhajans and hymns. The mind, through this exercise gets into a voluntary receptive mode. It is then, that the brain can be programmed with the noble thoughts-be they to sing the glory of the Lord or ways to deal with our everyday problems in a conscientious manner. A spiritual master can be most successful in the healing process of a mind beset by the badgering of the trivialities of life; he can convey the scriptural philosophy on virtous living, only to a receptive mind. And the mind is made most receptive when its guards are taken down, when it stops fighting the sensory signals coming in, when there are no obstructions between the sensory perceptions and memory cells.

The decoration of the temple with divine symbols and images, the incense, the flowers, enforcing a proper dress code, singing of the hymns and bhajans are all a prelude to the ultimate goal-to submit oneself to the reprogramming of ones brain with the doctrines of noble living.

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Renew Thyself: The Vedas say, 'All intelligences awake with the morning.' "Being awake is not just being physically up and around but being men tally vigorous to celebrate another day of living " observed Thiourea, "The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred million to the poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?"

As we grow older, some of us get lost in the monotony of life. We tend to lose our zest for living. As Thiourea observed, "the morning ceases to be the most enjoyable season of the day". We are awakened not by our newly acquired force and aspirations from within but by some electronic gadgets. It is not the undulations of celestial music that wake us up but the prolonged chatter of a radio. And that is very sad; because it signals the decline of our excitement for life.

To quote Henry David again, "A person who is physically, mentally and spiritually awake in the morning and who keeps pace with the sun; for him the whole day is a perpetual morning. It does not matter what the clock says or what the people around him say, morning is when he is awake and there is dawn in him. And if he can keep the spirit of early morning with him throughout the day, then he has lived through, not a day but a long morning". One must be drunk with living and not ever let himself be resigned to life. If one finds oneself at a dead end, he should develop some new avenues for the release of his creative energies. It does not have to be a money making endeavor. One has to develop a state of mind in which he is alert and buoyant throughout the day and the whole day becomes one long morning.

"Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again". Keep the spirit of Goddess USHA alive in you.

Be A Light Into Yourself: Hindu religion is based not on believing a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing the Divine. It is based not merely on being loyal to a faith but on striving to become one with the infinite. And there is a definite progression that a seeker goes through. A beginner might need symbols or pictures to focus his attention, and to stop his mind from wandering while in prayers. But if he is earnest about his spiritual development, he would soon progress to a stage where he would not need any props for performing his sadhna to reach the infinite. In his quest for the eternal, he would advance from material worship to mental worship and then on to the highest stage where he can realize the divine.

One must not be content with accumulating scriptural knowledge. That is just the beginning of a long journey. The discovery of inwardness is the essential basis of spiritual life. The scriptures could point out the road but each man must travel it for himself. Reading about a past buddha's communion with God is not going to result in your communion. It can excite you and inspire you to have the same experience. But in the end you must travel alone. You must find your own salvation. "For thousands who talk,

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one can think; for thousands who think, perhaps one sees and understands". Use the talking and thinking stages as stepping stones to rise to the ultimate level of experiencing the Divine.

Those of us who lead outward lives without being touched to our inner depths, do not understand life itself. We believe that we do our duty to religion by accepting the letter of faith and making a token cash donation to the temple of our choice. This results in our spiritual dependence and forces us to accept what others say about the religious truth. But once the individual in his freedom of spirit pursues truth and builds up a center in himself, he has enough strength and stability to deal with all that happens to him. He has the ability to fight back and retain his peace even when he is faced with adverse conditions. Liberation comes by experiencing the truth on your own. It comes not from accumulation of information, but from inner transformation.

Gautama Buddha said to his disciples, "Be a light unto yourself." Find the truth, build your own light and let it shine your path. Remember, the goal is not to find out how others attained bliss but to use that knowledge to attain it for yourself.

Abhidharma

Buddhism has at its core a psychology little known to the adherents but quite familiar to the Buddhist monks. 'Abhidharma' or the 'ultimate doctrine' has as its basis one of the most systematic psychologies of the world and elaborates Gautama Buddha's penetrating insights into human nature. This is the practical psychology that devotees apply to discipline their minds and hearts in order to attain a more ideal state of being.

According to Abhidharma, the human personality is like a river that keeps a constant form, seemingly a single identity, though not a single drop is the same as a moment ago. Each successive moment of our awareness is shaped by the previous moment, and will in turn determine the following moment. Each mental state is composed of a set of values, called mental factors, that combine to define that mental state. One's mental state at any given moment is a function of the biological and situational influences, in addition to a carryover from the preceding psychological moment.

The mental factors could be healthy ones or unhealthy ones. Good mental health depends on our ability to plant healthy factors in our mind so that they can inhibit and suppress unhealthy factors. The central healthy factor is 'Insight' which implies an ability to 'clearly perceive an object as it really is'. 'Mindfulness' is the 'continued clear comprehension' of an object. The two of them together 'perceive' and 'hold' clarity in one's mind and are sufficient to suppress all unhealthy factors.

The formal Western psychology, which is only about a hundred years old is merely a recent version of the human endeavor undertaken centuries ago in India. Modern psychology has rephrased the Buddhistic philosophy by saying that 'we should balance the negatives in our lives by the positives. We hould try to keep everything under proper

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perspective. We should remember that what is an obstacle for one person is an opportunity for another; what one man calls a stumbling block is used as a stepping stone by another.'

There is a humorous story which illustrates the concept of keeping a positive attitude. Two hunters were offered a bounty of $5,000 for each wolf that they could trap alive. For days they searched the mountains and forests in their area looking for the elusive prey. Exhausted one night, they fell asleep dreaming of getting rich one day. In the morning, one hunter opened his eyes, only to find that they were surrounded by wolves with flaming eyes and bared teeth. He nudged his friend with great excitement and said, "We are finally rich".

In the history of mankind there have been a few famous people and vast multitudes of ordinary folks, and the true winners among them have been the ones who kept a positive attitude toward life. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Don't waste yourself in rejection, but chant the beauty of the good".

Neutralizing the negative thoughts and replacing them with positive thoughts was good advice some 2500 years ago, and it is good advice today. Crush a negative thought today and replace it with a positive one. Experience the peace and happiness that flows from this process. Go ahead, do it now!

Heaven—Where Does it Exist: The concept of a heaven in the hereafter is perhaps as old as the human race itself. But in the entire history of mankind if one looks at the definition of heaven of any culture, of any religion, of any race in an era; one finds that it consists of the things that the people in that group are deprived of, or the things that they really miss in their lives. They project these things to be present in abundance in 'their heaven'. As an example, the Indian heaven almost invariably has rivers of milk and 'ghee' flowing through it. It is nothing but a longing for three sumptuous meals a day, which lot of people don't get. When there is shortage, even of clean drinking water, you can well under stand why we would imagine heaven to be loaded with food.

The second thing that almost invariably pops up in the definition of heaven is that it is peaceful and tranquil up there. Might that reflect our desire for an end to the hatred that different ethnic and religious groups harbor against each other?

With this thought in mind, should it not be the aim of life to create the conditions of heaven right here on earth? Should we not be working to achieve material and spiritual prosperity in our lives and thereby make the whole concept of heaven in the hereafter obsolete? If we could tame our carvings and make our lives full of joy, we probably would not even accept the concept of heaven, much less long to retire to. And that brings us to the idea of feeling happy with what we have; striving for more but nevertheless being at peace with ourselves. The Upanishads tell us to think of ourselves as mere users and not owners of our worldly possessions, of our status in the society and of the family we are blessed with. Following this canon just might do the trick and enable us to experience the heaven while we still reside on the mortal shores.

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You Belong in the Marketplace: The restless and incessant striving, with joy in the strife, is the greatest happiness that a man can experience in this world. The Isha Upanishad states that one must will himself to live for at least a hundred years and be occupied every minute of it. And the love of strife, the constant meeting of challenges head on, is what gives meaning to life and makes one desirous of living a long life. The poet says, "Zindagi har kadam ek nayee jung hai" (life is a struggle at every step of the way).

There are days when a person gets up and feels like crawling right back into the bed. For some people such days out-number the times when they are excited about another day of living. They hope to strike it rich one day through winning a lottery or through inheritance and then be able to live happily ever after without having to struggle every day to make a living. They somehow give up on life. Again the poet says, "Hai zindagi bhee maut jo himmat ko haren hain" (people who have lost the courage to fight are the living dead) A person who gives up the struggle, also loses his will to live on. For him the aspirations of youth end up in the disillusions of old age.

Whatever be your vocation or your hobby, you belong in the hustle and bustle of the marketplace. You belong where action is, because that is what sustains life. Designing new gadgets and fixing the old ones, treating and nursing sick people, being engaged in spiritual activities, making business deals, acquiring and disseminating knowledge, creating art and music, doing volunteer work, being engrossed in leisure activities is what you should be occupied with. As water retains its clarity only when it flows in a stream and becomes muddy and stale when it loses its flow; So does life lose its meaning when there is no struggle, no battles to fight and no excitement to keep the will to live strong. A person stays tuned up and razor sharp by being in the markeet place.

It is the struggle, and not the goal that brings salvation to the soul. The moment of man's greatest happiness is the moment of striving for others. And to make his strife more meaningful, man must over soar his own little self, and must join with others in some united effort for the greater good of humanity. Above all he must stay involved.

Death Penalty: Every time the state executes a convicted criminal, the debate over capital punishment resurfaces. The collective moral conscience of the society, which decides the fate of these individuals is largely shaped by our religious beliefs. What does our belief system dictate? Consider the following two scenarios from our scriptures:

1. In Mahabharat, at one stage in the great battle of Kurukheshter, Arjun was pitted against Karan. During this fateful fight, one wheel of Karan's chariot got stuck in the bloody mire of the ground. As he descended to make his chariot mobile again he requested Arjun to hold his arrows while he attended to his chariot. That was a reasonable request as per the norms of war fare in that age. But Shri Krishan urged Arjun to continue the fight. Arjun paused and hesitated since he did not want to take advantage of this awkward situation, but Shri Krishan once again exhorted him to continue fighting and to kill Karan. At this Arjun shot an arrow on his bow Gandiva, which cut off Karan's head.

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2. In Ramayan, Lord Shiva is said to have bestowed a special protective power on the evil king Bali. Under the umbrella of this protective power, no one could defeat him in a fair fight. As per the norms of the day, for a fight to be fair the two dueling opponents had to fight face to face. No sneak attacks were permitted. Even though Bali was bitterly detested by his subjects, yet no one could penetrate his protective shield in a fair fight and dispose him off. It was with this dilemma that Bali's brother Sugreev enlisted Shri Ram's help. Upon hearing the facts, Shri Ram did not hesitate in setting aside the rules of fair play and killed Bali with an arrow shot from behind a tree. There are several other instances in our scriptures in which even God Himself, in His different human incarnations bent the rules of fair play in order to get rid of evil. All these instances seem to point in the same direction, that is, 'Fight an evil per son to the end and take advantage of his every weakness to annihilate him. Show no mercy and even suspend the code of honor temporarily, to deal with the situation.' Can this code be extrapolated to mean that our scriptures endorse death penalty? You be the judge.

To Pray or Not to Pray: Secularists point to the rivalries between different religions as a proof of the futility of religion. Scientists question the very existence of God. Common logic dictates that when you pray, there is no one out there listening to you. The words you utter during your prayers just get lost in thin air. Religious people insist on the existence of God. So who is right, and who is wrong? Who can provide an answer to this dilemma about the very existence of God and about the need for prayers in our daily lives?

Psychologists seem to have a valid explanation. They think that self-talk is the way to propel yourself in a certain direction. For example when you repeatedly tell yourself that you need a new car, you subconsciously program your brain into working in that direction. Once the idea gets firmly implanted, your brain implores you to start looking for ways to finance your purchase. It might take the shape of another part time job. Or it might result in bigger savings from your present income. Whatever the mode your brain directs you to accumulate enough funds for your desired acquisitions.

People have been known to recover from near fatal diseases like cancer by asserting their willingness to live on. By their selftalk they were able to persuade their brain to manufacture and release the drugs required to kill the organisms attacking their bodies. Granted that it does not happen in every case. But people have been known to have willed themselves few extra years after the medical profession had given up on them. In each of these cases, the will to live on, the self-talk to program their brain into fighting their malady played an important part in their healing process.

Psychologists liken prayer to self-talk. They think that the self-talk programs our brain which in turn directs our actions towards achieving our desired goals. Priests on the other hand, look at it from a religious point of view and insist that God does listen to our prayers and grants us that; which we are worthy of. Whichever point of view you

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may agree with the one put forth by the psychologists or the one put forth by the priests the final conclusion is the same. Prayers are a very important part of our daily lives.

In the words of late Dr. Radhakrishnan, "When in the sorrow of death or the suffering of despair, when trust is betrayed or love desecrated, when life becomes tasteless and meaningless, man stretches forth his hands to heaven to know if perchance there is an answering presence behind the dark clouds; it is then that he comes into touch with the supreme in the solitude of his consciousness, in the realm of the profound and intense. It is the world of light and love in which there is no language but that of silence. It is the world of joy that reveals itself in innumerable forms." Must we wait for moments of despair before we acknowledge His presence? Must we be driven to total defeat before we surrender? Must we feel helpless before we start to pray?

Synchronicity: A friend of mine, Mr. S. had gone to Calcutta to look for a bride. While in India, he happened to travel to Bombay. There, in a store Mr. S met Mrs. M who was also visiting from the U.S. and had been looking for a husband for her younger sister Miss P. Mrs. M invited Mr. S to her parents' house. The next day Mr. S and his parents went to meet his prospective bride and her family and the rest, as they say is history. This is a true story which happened in the early seventies.

The pleasant ending of this story was the culmination of a series of coincidences. Mr. S and Mrs. M visiting India at the same time, Mr. S travelling to Bombay, his chance encounter with Mrs. M in a store, leading to his marriage to Miss P. To us Hindus, it was fate, divine intervention or simply a matter of Sanjog. Our philosophic thought teaches us about the acceptance of life as it unfolds because we believe that the Supreme Power has a hand in everything that happens to us.

In the West, the concept of Sanjog, until recently had been an alien idea. But psychoanalyst Carl Jung was fascinated by his study of this phenomenon in which two events take place at the same time with neither one causing the other to hap pen, and yet they are related to one another in a meaningful way. He coined a new name for it - Synchronicity. Thus was another ancient Hindu tenet blessed by the scientific West. It is not looked at any more as just another happening based on statistical probability.

The coming together by apparent chance, of factors that are not causally linked but that nevertheless show themselves to be meaningfully related is at the very heart of the process by which the purpose of an individual's life unfolds and becomes his "fate". Call it Sanjog or Synchronicity, it all happens through Divine Intervention.

Our Collective Heritage: As children we are introduced to one of the many creeds of our Hindu religion-Sanatan Dharam, Jainism, Arya Samaj, Vedantism, Shivaism-or one of the many other creeds on the horizon. From then on we develop a religious complexion which stays with us for the rest of our lives. When we want more light, we read only one set of religious books to the total exclusion of others, lest by accident we get more light than we want.

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A beam of white light passing through a prism splits up into a rainbow of colors. We select one of these colors, say the red one, and look at life under the red light. In our ignorance we refuse to look at life under the illumination of the blue light or the green light or the yellow light. We miss out on experiencing the true picture. Our shallow thinking prevents us from learning about the goodness in other creeds.

We are the descendents of the mighty Arjun, the sublime Krishan and the noble Ram. The teachings of Shankaracharya, Swami Dayanand, Guru Nanak, Buddh, Mahavir, Ramkrishan etc. are the collective heritage of all Hindus. There is no need to shut any one of them out. No matter what his religion is, the experience of every mystic is the same. And these mystics have left us with many powerful thoughts to ponder over and to illuminate our lives with.

As we celebrate India's Independence Day (or should we call it India's Freedom Day, as we never did depend on the colonial powers for our survival), let us celebrate our collective heritage and not be blinded by the monochromatic lights of different shades of Hinduism. Happy 15th folks!

Conformity: From day one of his life, there is an attempt to shape every man into a common mold. The society, the school system and even the family demands conformity. But when you buckle under and become part of a herd, you lose your uniqueness. You give up your convictions and passions in favor of being accepted by the crowd. You become a mere actor playing different roles — role of a dutiful child, of a dutiful parent or of a dutiful spouse. Strive to find your own voice and do it now, because the longer you wait to begin the less likely you are to find it at all.

Psychoanalyst Erich Fromm wrote, "Man by origin is a herd animal. His actions are determined by an instinctive impulse to follow the leader and to have close contact with other animals around him. Inasmuch as we are sheep, there is no greater threat to our existence than to lose this contact with the herd and be isolated. But we are also human; we are endowed with reason which by its very nature is independent of the herd. Rationalization is a compromise between our sheep nature and our human capacity to think. And the full emergence of reason depends on our attaining independence so that our judgement is not based on our fear of being isolated from the herd. A few individuals can stand this isolation and say the truth in spite of the danger of losing touch. They are the true heroes of the human race but for whom we would still be living in caves."

Submission to a powerful authority gives a feeling of protection and belonging, but you lose your independence. Dare to strike out and find new ground. Be your own person. Look at things in a way different from the one you were trained to do. Don't be afraid of isolation. Resist the pressure to conform. If you don't, the casualty could be your heart and soul.

On Flying a Kite: This is the kite flying season in Southern California. You can see the little ones in school parks struggling to get their kites up in the air. Erma Bombeck

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writes that kite flying is a lot like raising children. You spend what feels like a lifetime, getting them off the ground. You run with them until you are both breath less . . . they crash. You add a little longer tail and try again . . . they hit a tree. You rescue them, comfort them, fix them up with a couple of band-aids and try to get them up again. You watch them as they get lifted by the wind and finally become airborne. What a thrill it is to see them soar. Then they need more string and you keep unrolling your ball of twine. As the kite flies higher and higher, there is sadness mixed with joyful emotions. Deep inside you know that the beautiful kite of yours is going to get tangled with another kite and disappear into to the sunset. It will no longer need the lifeline that you so lovingly provided. And you feel the gratification by knowing that you did your job.

Too often when our children are little, we don't spend enough time with them. We are too busy doing our own things — having a busy social life, trying to make our first million or working to gain social prominence. We grow apart. Then one day, they are old enough to take care of themselves and don't need us anymore. We wake up, sometimes too late to enjoy them. And that is very sad. Because the joy that they provide, the vitality they infuse in their aging caretakers is overwhelming. They make us feel young again. Don't miss out on bonding with your adorable kites. Hold them and hug them and be part of their little games. Spend some quality time with the precious little angels. They are so much a reflection of you when you were little. You would have enough time to do your own things later on. After all they are going to be around only for about eighteen years before they get shipped off to some university.

Mark Twain on 'What is Man': Man, according to Mark Twain is a mere machine. 'What so ever he is, is due to his make, and the influences brought to bear upon him by his heredities, his habitat and his associations.' Further more, 'From cradle to the grave a man never does a single thing which has any FIRST AND FOREMOST object but one-to secure peace of mind and spiritual comfort for HIMSELF.' Mark Twain claims that every man acts per his make. Men are born with some hereditary traits-gifts and shortcomings-and they act according to these traits. Just as a sewing machine made from different grades of steel or from different metals will perform differently, so would a tin man, a gold man or a steel man act according to the nature of his make. His make however is influenced by his training and his environment.

In one of his fables he says, 'A man is waiting at a bus station to reach home in the middle of a storm. A gray-haired ragged old homeless woman approaches him and requests for help. He ponders over for a few seconds and gives her his last dollar. He then walks home in the middle of a storm. On the way home his heart is singing with joy because he did something good. When he reaches home he proudly recounts his tale of charity and earns the respect and affection of his family. He has a hearty dinner and sleeps well that night, knowing how benevolent he has been to the old lady. That is a very good return on an investment of one dollar.' Mark Twain concludes that earning his personal self-approval, securing his peace of mind and his desire to earn the affection of his family

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and to feel good about himself were the motivations that drove this man to help the old lady. Whatever he did was a result of his make, his training and above all an attempt to buy peace of mind for himself. There were no favors done. Noble, Generous, Benevolent etc. are merely undeserving labels that men bestow upon each other.

It sure is a different point of view, which makes you stop and think!

Vedas and Philosophy

The Vedas are the most ancient books in the World, and they are the Foundation of Hinduism. Veda means knowledge. Any form of Knowledge acquired is considered as a Veda whereby it has no beginning or end. While it might surprise people how a book can have no beginning or end, the ancient Rishis who wrote these accepted that the complete knowledge of the Universe could never fit in any book, so there would always be new things to discover. This philosophy makes Hinduism a very tolerant religion, always ready to accept new ideas from other cultures.

The Vedas were compiled by the great sage Krishna Dwipayana during the Dwapara Yuga with the goal to come up with a de-facto standard of education. Upon gathering all the teachings passed on from the Acharyas (Teachers) to their Sishyas (Students) from Kingdom to Kingdom, he compiled them into 4 standard structures; the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. Upon completion of this great feat he was given the title "Veda Vyasa" which means "Compiler of the Vedas".

The Vedas are considered Shruti (or Sruti), or revealed texts. They were not given by a prophet, but heard by many different Rishis (or very advanced Yogis) during deep meditation. These verses were combined and written in the Vedas in poetic form.

The Vedas are not Polytheistic. Dr. David Frawley, in his book "Wisdom of the Ancient Seers" mentions "The Gods, though they have a human facet, are not anthropomorphic. The Gods represent not the Divine in the image of Man, but rather man in the image of Divine, in the image of all creation."

Regarding the charge of Pantheism, he says in the same book "The natural imagery of the ancients reflects not the Divine reduced to natural world but the natural world as a reflection of the inner truth".

So Agni, the God of Fire, is not normal fire, but the fire of transformation. He burns our inner demons, and lights the way to Enlightenment. Soma, the God of Wine, is the Divine bliss we feel when reach the Divine, and feel him in all creation. Saraswati is not a river or Goddess of a River, but rather the River of Divine knowledge that continuously flows from heaven. When the Demons block this river and the Gods fight them, it is not a literal battle, but a figurative one when the Divine qualities inherent in Man fight the Demons of ignorance.

Organization: The Mantras are collected into anthologies called Samhitas. There are four Samhitas: the *Rk* (poetry), *Sman* (song), *Yajus* (prayer), and *Atharvan* (a kind of

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priest). They are commonly referred to as the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda respectively. Each Samhita is preserved in a number of versions or recensions (shakhas), the differences among them being minor, except in the case of the Yajur Veda, where two "White" (*shukla*) recensions contain the Mantras only, while four "Black" (*krishna*) recensions interspersed the Brahmana parts among the Mantras.

The Rigveda contains the oldest part of the corpus, and consists of 1028 hymns. The Samaveda is mostly a rearrangement of the Rigveda for musical rendering. The Yajurveda gives sacrificial prayers and the Atharvaveda gives charms, incantations and magical formulae. In addition to these there are some stray secular material, such as legends.

The next category of texts are the Brahmanas. These are ritual texts that describe in detail the sacrifices in which the Mantras were to be used, as well as comment on the meaning of the sacrificial ritual. Each of the Brahmanas is associated with one of the Samhitas. The Brahmanas may either form separate texts, or in the case of the Black Yajur Veda, can be partly integrated into the text of the Samhita. The most important of the Brahmanas is the Shatapatha Brahmana of the White Yajur Veda.

The Aranyakas and Upanishads are theological and philosophical works. They are mystic or spiritual interpretations of the Vedas, and are considered their putative end and essence, and thus known as Vedanta ("the end of the Vedas"). They often form part of the Brahmanas (*e.g.* the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad). They are the basis of the Vedanta school of Darsana.

Position and Compilation: Hindu tradition regards the Vedas as uncreated, eternal and being revealed to sages (Rishis). The rishi Krishna Dwaipayana, better known as Veda Vyasa – "Vyasa" meaning "editor" or "compiler" – reputedly distributed this mass of hymns into the four books of the Vedas, each book being supervised by one of his disciples. Paila arranged the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. Those that were chanted during religious and social ceremonies were compiled by Vaishampayana under the title *Yajus mantra Samhita* (see Yajur-Veda). Jaimini is said to have collected hymns that were set to music and melody — "Saman" (see Sama-Veda). The fourth collection of hymns and chants known as the *Atharva Samhita* was collated by Sumanta.

Philosophies and sects that developed in the Indian subcontinent have taken differing positions on the Vedas. In Buddhism and Jainism, the authority of the Veda is repudiated, and both evolved into separate religions. The sects which did not explicitly reject the Vedas remained followers of the Sanatana Dharma, which is known in modern times as Hinduism.

Study: Elaborate methods for preserving the text (memorizing by heart instead of writing), subsidiary disciplines (Vedanga), exegetical literature, etc., were developed in the Vedic schools. Sayana, from the 14th century, is known for his elaborate commentaries on the Vedic texts. While much evidence suggests that everyone was equally allowed to study the Vedas and many Vedic "authors" were women, the later dharmashastras, from the Sutra age, dictate that women and Shudras were neither required nor allowed to study

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the Veda. These dharmashastras regard the study of the Vedas a religious duty of the three upper varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas). In modern times, Vedic studies are crucial in the understanding of Indo-European linguistics, as well as ancient Indian history.

Many forms of Hinduism encourage the Vedic mantras to be interpreted as liberally and as philosophically as possible, unlike the texts of the three Abrahamic religions. In fact, over-literal interpretation of the mantras is actually discouraged, and even the three layers of commentaries (Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads), which form an integral part of the Sruti literature, interpret the seemingly polytheistic, ritualistic, and highly complex Samhitas in a philosophical and metaphorical way to explain the "hidden" concepts of God (Ishwara), the Supreme Being (Brahman) and the soul or the self (Atman). Many Hindus believe that the very sound of the Vedic mantras is purifying for the environment and the human mind.

Cosmogony: The Vedic view of the world and cosmogony sees one true divine principle self-projecting as the divine word, *Vaak*, 'birthing' the cosmos that we know from 'Hiranyagarbha' or Golden Womb, a primordial sun figure that is equivalent to Surya. The varied gods like Vayu, Indra, Rudra (the Destroyer), Agni (Fire, the sacrificial medium) and the goddess Saraswati (the Divine Word, aka Vaak) are just some examples of the myriad aspects of the one underlying nature of the universe.

Dating: Many historians regard the Vedas as one of the oldest surviving texts (see the ancient Egyptian texts "The Story of Sinuhe" and the "Ipuwer Papyrus", both dated 1800 BCE). The newest parts of the Vedas are estimated to date to around 500 BCE; the oldest text (Rig Veda) is found to have been completed by 1500 BCE after being composed over hundreds of years, but most Indologists agree that a long oral tradition possibly existed before it was written down. They represent the oldest stratum of Indian literature and according to modern scholars are written in forms of a language which evolved into Sanskrit. They consider the use of Vedic Sanskrit for the language of the texts an anachronism, although it is generally accepted. Some writers have used astronomical references in the Rigveda to date it to as early as the 4th millennium BC.

The Hindus fundamental belief is that the Vedas are sanatan-eternal- and apaurusheya not composed by human entity. At the beginning of every cosmic cycle of brahma, Paramatma utters the divine words. Later, at various periods great rishis perceive these divine words and imparted this knowledge orally through generations. It is believed that this Vedic knowledge totally disappeared at the end of Brahmas cosmic cycle and reappeared again in Brahma's next cycle of creation. Later a part of vedic knowledge was written. Maha Rishi Veda Vyas simplified this one Veda by dividing it into four: Rig, Sam, Yajur, Atharva. In Bharatvarshas true tradition the vedas are eternal.

Etymology: The word "veda" means "knowledge", and is derived from the root "vid", Sanskrit for "know", reconstructed as being derived from the Proto-Indo-European root

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"weid-", meaning "see" or "know". "Weid-" is also the source of the English word "wit", as well as "vision" through Latin. The Czech and Slovak words for "science" are "vda" resp. "veda", derived from western Slavic "vdet" resp. "vediee" for "know".

Derivation from the Vedas-Upavedas

The Upavedas are derived from the Vedas and are specific applications of the teachings of the Vedas. The main Upavedas are:

1. *Ayurveda:* Indias healing system, it lays more stress on living with nature instead of fighting it, hence preventive instead of corrective medicine.
2. *Dhanur Veda:* Martial arts.

   Ayurveda and Dhanurveda have points in common. They both work with Marma, or natural Pran (Life Energy) that flows in the body.

   Ayruveda heals the body, while Dhanurveda is used for killing. This concept is also known to Chinese as Acupuncture and related Chinese Martial Arts.
3. *Stahapatya Veda:* Architecture, sculpture and geomancy. Used especially for Temple design.
4. *Gandharv Veda:* Music, poetry and dance.

Some other fields like Jyotish (Indian Astrology), Tantra (based on the Puranas, which are in turn based on Vedas), Shiksha and Vyakara (Grammar and pronunciation) are also based on the Vedas.

The six schools of Vedic Philosophy

1. Nyaya — The Logical School, founded by Gautama
2. Vaishesika — Atomic school, founded by Kannada
3. Samkhya — Cosmic Principle School, founded by Kapila
4. Yoga — Yoga school (includes Raj, Hatha and Tantra Yoga), founded by Hiranyagarbha, although Patanjalis Sutras are the most popular book that has survived.
5. Purva Mimamsa — Ritualistic School, founded by Jamini
6. Uttara Mimasa/Vedant — Theological School, founded by Badarayana.

Vedanta was made popular by Adi Shankara also called Shankaracharya, who founded the Swami Order of Monks, and established 4 schools (or Maths) in 4 parts of India to carry on teachings of the Vedas in the 7th century.

The Hidden Meaning of the Vedas: The Vedas were written in poetic language. By literally translating them, Western translators lost some of the poetic beauty. Their interpretations of the shastras are often shallow. Plus, they had to force meanings where

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there were none. Words like Pantheism, Polytheism are used to describe Hinduism, but this shows the translators ignorance or bias. One of the best commentaries to Vedas is written by Sri Aurobindo. Rig Veda is considered by many to be a book written by barbaric culture worshipping violent Gods. Aurobindo realized that this was due to the biased view of Westerners who had some preconceived views on Hindu culture.

So Aurobindo decided to look for hidden meanings in the Vedas. He looked at the Rig Veda as a psychological book, inspiring the people to move towards God, but in a hidden language. So Indra is the God of Indriya, or the senses (sight, touch, hear, taste etc.). Varun means air, but in esoteric terms means Pran, or the Life force. So when the Rig Vedas says "Call Indra and Varun to drink Soma Rasa" they mean use the Mind senses and Pran to receive divine bliss (Soma means wine of Gods, but in several texts also means Divine Bliss, as in Right handed Tantra).

Agni, or God of Fire, is the hidden Divine Spark in us, which we have to fan, so it grows and engulfs our whole body. So the sacrifice of the Vedas actually means sacrificing ones ego to the internal Agni, or Divine spark. These essays originally appeared in the Arya, but have been condensed as a book form as "The Secret of the Vedas" by Sri Aurobindo.

Westerners and Vedas: The Vedas are hidden in mystic language. The Rishis hid 3-4 esoteric meanings within each verse, and it required a good Guru to explain them.

One of the few Westerners to study the Vedas with an Indian Guru is Dr. David Frawley. In his excellent book "Wisdom of the Ancient Seers" he explores ideas similar to one by Sri Aurobindo. He describes Indra as a brave soul, willing to fight evil and darkness. He is the inner Spirit, wanting to break free from the fake shackles of ego.

Frawley, who also studied Ayurveda and Tantra, says Agni also refers to Kundalini, and Soma Rasa to the Sahasra Chakra and the bliss that flows from it. Savitur is the Sun that shines in the darkness of ignorance, and guides us towards the Truth.

Samhita

The Samhita (Sanskrit: "joined" or "collected") is the basic text of each of the Vedas, comprising collections of hymns and ritual texts. This term was originally used in reference to the style of recitation used during hymns and chants. In the Vedas the Samhitas are supplemented by later explanatory commentaries, notably the Brahmanas and Upanishads.

The term is also sometimes spelled 'Sanhita'.

Other Samhitas: In later times, the term Samhita also came to be applied to the names of texts belonging to various fields of knowledge, not directly connected to the Vedas, *e.g.*

- Gherand Samhita
- Charak Samhita
- Ashtavakra Samhita

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Gherand Samhita: Gheranda Samhita (Sanskrit for "Gheranda's Collection") is one of the three classic texts of Hatha Yoga (the other two being the Hatha Yoga Pradapika and the Shiva Samhita). It is a late 17th Century text and is considered to be the most encyclopedic of the three classic texts on Hatha Yoga.

Gheranda Samhita is a manual of Yoga taught by Gheranda to Chanda. Unlike other Hatha Yoga texts, the Gheranda Samhita focuses upon the *Shat Kriyas* or internal body cleansing, *i.e.*, *Ghatastha Yoga*. The closing stanzas of the Gheranda Samhita deal with Samadhi, but the methods taught are different from Patanjali's methods.

Charaka: Charaka, sometimes spelled Caraka, (300 BC) is one of the founders of Ayurveda. According to Charaka, health and disease are not predetermined and life may be prolonged by human effort.

Contributions: According to the Charaka tradition, there existed six schools of medicine, founded by the disciples of the sage Punarvasutreya. Each of his disciples, Agnivesha, Bhela, Jatkkarna, Parshara, Hrita, and Kshrapni, composed a Samhit. Of these, the one composed by Agnivesha was supposed to be the best. The Agnivesha Samhit was later revised by Charaka and it came to be known as Charaka Samhit. The Charaka Samhit was revised by Dridhbala.

Yurveda is traditionally divided into eight branches which, in Charaka's scheme, are:

1. sktra-sthna, general principles
2. nidna-sthna, pathology
3. vimna-sthna, diagnostics
4. shamrasthna, physiology and anatomy
5. indriya-sthna, prognosis
6. chikits-sthna, therapeutics
7. kalpa-sthna, pharmacy
8. siddhi-sthna, successful treatment

Form of Charak Samhita: Charak Samhita contains 120 adhyayas (chapters) in all. These are devided in 8 parts:

1. Sutra sthana 30
2. Nidan sthana 08
3. Viman sthana 08
4. sharir sthana 08
5. Indriya sthana 12
6. Chikitsa sthana 30
7. Kalpa sthana 12
8. Siddhi sthana 12

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Ashtavakra Gita

The Ashtavakra Gita (Song of Ashtavakra), also known by the name Ashtavakra Samhita is an influential non-dualist Vedic scripture traditionally said to have been spoken by the Sage Ashtavakra, though its authorship is not known with certainty. There is little doubt though that it is very old, probably dating back to the days of the classic Vedanta period. The Sanskrit style and the doctrine expressed would seem to warrant this assessment. The work was known, appreciated and quoted by Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda, as well as by Ramana Maharshi. Radhakrishnan refers to it with great respect, while even Sri Ravi Shankar has given a commentary on the scripture. Apart from that, the work speaks for itself. It presents the traditional teachings of Advaita Vedanta with a clarity and power very rarely matched.

The *Ashtavakra Gita* does not date itself or brand itself to any region, culture, or peoples, although it does contain Hindu-specific references, especially in the final chapter entitled 'I am Shiva' where it is proclaimed in the final verse that the author is in truth one with God. The essence of the *Ashtavakra Gita* is that there is no such thing as existence or non existence, right or wrong, or moral or immoral. In the eyes of the sage Ashtavakra who is the ostensible author of this text, one's true identity can be found by simply recognizing oneself as Pure Existence and that as individuals we are the Awareness of all things.

The Ashtavakra Gita teaches that one is already free once one realises they are free. It advocates non-action (similar to the Daoist concept of Wu Wei), the loss of desire and severing of worldly attachments. To free oneself from the cycle of life and death one should withdraw from all Earthly desires, worries and cares. To continue including in Earthly things even after one has realized their true nature is said to be foolish and time wasting. Instead it paints a picture of The Master as someone who continues to keep up their responsibilities in the world, not because they believe they have to or due to any worldy attachments, but simply that it is in their nature to do so. It is important to avoid misinterpretation in this regard, and to that end teachers traditionally recommend that Ashtavakra Gita be pursued by only those who have already advanced on the spiritual path. Ashtavakra teaches that emotion, thought and even meditation can lead to further bondage and that religious practice itself is of no meaning to the enlightened.

Rigveda

The Rigveda consists of 1,028 hymns (or 1,017 discounting the apocryphal *vālakhalya* hymns 8.49–8.59) composed in Vedic Sanskrit, many of which are intended for various sacrificial rituals. This long collection of short hymns is mostly devoted to the praise of the gods. It is organized into 10 books, known as Mandalas. Each mandala is comprised of hymns, called *skkta*, which are further comprised of individual. The Mandalas are by no means of equal length or age: The "family books", mandalas 2-7, are considered the oldest part and comprise the shortest books, arranged by length, accounting for 38% of

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the text. RV 8 and RV 9, likely comprising hymns of mixed age, account for 15% and 9%, respectively. RV 1 and RV 10, finally, are both the youngest and the longest books, accounting for 37% of the text.

Preservation: The *Rigveda* is preserved by two major shakhas ("branches", *i.e.* schools or recensions), *Zkala* and *Bckala*. Considering its great age, the text is spectacularly well preserved and uncorrupted, the two recensions being practically identical, so that scholarly editions can mostly do without a critical apparatus. Associated to *Zkala* is the Aitareya-Brahmana. The *Bckala* includes the Khilani and has the Kausitaki-Brahmana associated to it. This compilation or redaction included the arrangement in books as well as orthoepic changes, such as regularization of sandhi (called by Oldenberg *orthoepische Diaskeunase*). It took place centuries after the composition of the earliest hymns, about coeval to the redaction of the other Vedas.

From the time of its redaction, the text has been handed down in two versions: The *Samhitapatha* has all Sanskrit rules of sandhi applied and is the text used for recitation. The Padapatha has each word isolated in its pausa form and is used for memorization. The Padapatha is, as it were, a commentary to the *Samhitapatha*, but the two seem to be about coeval. The original text as reconstructed on metrical grounds (*viz.* "original" in the sense that it aims to recover the hymns as composed by the Rishis) lies somewhere between the two, but closer to the Samhitapatha.

Organization: Hermann Grassmann has though numbered the hymns 1 through to 1028, putting the *valakhilya* at the end. The entire 1028 hymns of the *Rigveda*, in the 1877 edition of Aufrecht, contain a total of 10,552 verses, or 39,831 padas. The Shatapatha Brahmana gives the number of syllables to be 432,000, while the metrical text of van Nooten and Holland (1994) has a total of 395,563 syllables (or an average of 9.93 syllables per pada); counting the number of syllables is not straightforward because of issues with sandhi. Most verses are jagati (padas of 12 syllables), trishtubh (padas of 11 syllables), viraj (padas of 10 syllables) or gayatri or anushtubh (padas of 8 syllables).

The chief gods of the *Rigveda* are Agni, the sacrificial fire, Indra, a heroic god who is praised for having slain his enemy Vrtra, and Soma, the sacred potion, or the plant it is made from. Other prominent gods are Mitra, Varuna and Ushas (the dawn) and the Ashvins.

Also invoked are Savitar, Vishnu, Rudra, Pushan, Brihaspati, Brahmanaspati, Dyaus Pita (the sky), Prithivi (the earth), Surya (the sun), Vayu (the wind), Apas (the waters), Parjanya (the rain), Vac (the word), the Maruts, the Adityas, the Rebus, the Vishvadevas (the all-gods), many rivers (notably the Sapta Sindhu, and the Sarasvati River), as well as various further minor gods, persons, concepts, phenomena and items. It also contains fragmentary references to possible historical events, notably the struggle between the early Vedic people (known as Vedic Aryans, a subgroup of the Indo-Aryans) and their enemies, the Dasa.

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Rigveda manuscript in Devanagari, early 19th century

- Mandala 1 comprises 191 hymns. Hymn 1.1 is addressed to Agni, and his name is the first word of the *Rigveda*. The remaining hymns are mainly addressed to Agni and Indra. Hymns 1.154 to 1.156 are addressed to Vishnu.
- Mandala 2 comprises 43 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. It is chiefly attributed to the Rishi *gitsamda saunohotra*.
- Mandala 3 comprises 62 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. The verse 3.62.10 has great importance in Hinduism as the Gayatri Mantra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *visvmitra gthinas*.
- Mandala 4 consists of 58 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *vmadeva gautama*.
- Mandala 5 comprises 87 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra, the Visvadevas, the Maruts, the twin-deity Mitra-Varuna and the Asvins. Two hymns each are dedicated to Ushas (the dawn) and to Savitar. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *atri* family.
- Mandala 6 comprises 75 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *brhaspatya* family of Angirasas.
- Mandala 7 comprises 104 hymns, to Agni, Indra, the Visvadevas, the Maruts, Mitra-Varuna, the Asvins, Ushas, Indra-Varuna, Varuna, Vayu (the wind), two each to Sarasvati and Vishnu, and to others. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *vasicmha maitravaurni*.
- Mandala 8 comprises 103 hymns to different gods. Hymns 8.49 to 8.59 are the apocryphal *valakhalya*. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *kyva* family.
- Mandala 9 comprises 114 hymns, entirely devoted to Soma *Pavamana*, the plant of the sacred potion of the Vedic religion.
- Mandala 10 comprises 191 hymns, to Agni and other gods. It contains the Nadistuti sukta which is in praise of rivers and is important for the reconstruction of the geography of the Vedic civilization and the Purusha sukta which has significance in Hindu tradition. It also contains the Nasadiya sukta (10.129), probably the most celebrated hymns in the west, which deals with creation.

Rishis: Each hymn of the Rigveda is traditionally attributed to a specific rishi, and the "family books" (2-7) are said to have been composed by one family of rishis each. The main families, listed by the number of verses ascribed to them are:

- Angirasas: 3619 (especially Mandala 6)
- Kanvas: 1315 (especially Mandala 8)
- Vasishthas: 1267 (Mandala 7)
- Vaishvamitras: 983 (Mandala 3)
- Atris: 885 (Mandala 5)

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- Bhrgus: 473
- Kashyapas: 415 (part of Mandala 9)
- Grtsamadas: 401 (Mandala 2)
- Agastyas: 316
- Bharatas: 170

The *Rigveda* was translated into English by Ralph T.H. Griffith in 1896. Partial English translations by Maurice Bloomfield and William Dwight Whitney exist. Griffith's translation is good, considering its age, but it is no replacement for Geldner's 1951 translation (in German), the only independent scholarly translation so far. The later translations by Elizarenkova depends heavily on Geldner, but Elizarenkova's translation (in Russian) is valuable in taking into account scholarly literature up to 1990.

Hindu Tradition: According to Indian tradition, the Rigvedic hymns were collected by Paila under the guidance of Vysa, who formed the Rigveda Samhita as we know it. According to the Zatapatha Brhmana, the number of syllables in the *Rigveda* is 432,000, equalling the number of muhurtas (1 day = 30 muhurtas) in forty years. This statement stresses the underlying philosophy of the Vedic books that there is a connection (bandhu) between the astronomical, the physiological, and the spiritual.

The authors of the Brhmana literature described and interpreted the Rigvedic ritual. Yaska was an early commentator of the *Rigveda*. In the 14th century, Syana wrote an exhaustive commentary on it. Other *Bhacyas* (commentaries) that have been preserved up to present times are those by Madhava, Skacdasvmin and Veckatamdhava.

Dating and Historical Reconstruction: Geography of the Rigveda, with river names; the extent of the Swat and Cemetery H cultures are also indicated.

The *Rigveda* is far more archaic than any other Indo-Aryan text. For this reason, it was in the center of attention of western scholarship from the times of Max Muller. The *Rigveda* records an early stage of Vedic religion, still closely tied to the pre-Zoroastrian Persian religion. It is thought that Zoroastrianism and Vedic Hinduism evolved from an earlier common religious Indo-Iranian culture.

The Rigveda's core is accepted to date to the late Bronze Age, making it the only example of Bronze Age literature with an unbroken tradition. Its composition is usually dated to roughly between 1700–1100 BC. The text in the following centuries underwent pronunciation revisions and standardization (samhitapatha, padapatha). This redaction would have been completed in about the 7th century BC. Writing appears in India in ca. the 5th century BC in the form of the Brahmi script, but texts of the length of the Rigveda were likely not written down before the Early Middle Ages, in the Gupta or Siddham scripts, and while written manuscripts were used for teaching in medieval times, they played a minor role in the preservation of knowledge because of their ephemeral nature (Indian manuscripts were on bark or palm leaves and decomposed rapidly in the

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tropical climate) until the advent of the printing press in British India. The hymns were thus preserved by oral tradition for up to a millennium from the time of their composition until the redaction of the Rigveda, and the entire Rigveda was preserved in shakhas for another 2,500 years from the time of its redaction until the *editio princeps* by Muller, a collective feat of memorization unparalleled in any other known society.

Puranic literature names Vidagdha as the author of the Pada-text. Other scholars argue that Sthavira Sak of the Aitareya Aranyaka is the padakara of the RV. After their composition, the texts were preserved and codified by a vast body of Vedic priesthood as the central philosophy of the Iron Age Vedic civilization.

The *Rigveda* describes a mobile, nomadic culture, with horse-drawn chariots and metal (bronze) weapons. According to some scholars the geography described is consistent with that of the Punjab (Gandhara): Rivers flow north to south, the mountains are relatively remote but still reachable (Soma is a plant found in the mountains, and it has to be purchased, imported by merchants). Nevertheless, the hymns were certainly composed over a long period, with the oldest elements possibly reaching back into Indo-Iranian times, or the early 2nd millennium BC.

Thus there is some debate over whether the boasts of the destruction of stone forts by the Vedic Aryans and particularly by Indra refer to cities of the Indus Valley civilization or whether they hark back to clashes between the early Indo-Aryans with the BMAC (Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex) culture centuries earlier, in what is now northern Afghanistan and southern Turkmenistan (separated from the upper Indus by the Hindu Kush mountain range, and some 400 km distant). In any case, while it is highly likely that the bulk of the *Rigveda* was composed in the Punjab, even if based on earlier poetic traditions, there is no mention of either tigers or rice in the *Rigveda* (as opposed to the later Vedas), suggesting that Vedic culture only penetrated into the plains of India after its completion. Similarly, it is assumed that there is no mention of iron. The Iron Age in northern India begins in the 12th century BC with the Black and Red Ware (BRW) culture. This is a widely accepted timeframe for the beginning codification of the *Rigveda* (*i.e.* the arrangement of the individual hymns in books, and the fixing of the samhitapatha (by applying Sandhi) and the padapatha (by dissolving Sandhi) out of the earlier metrical text), and the composition of the younger Vedas. This time probably coincides with the early Kuru kingdom, shifting the center of Vedic culture east from the Punjab into what is now Uttar Pradesh.

Some of the names of gods and goddesses found in the *Rigveda* are found amongst other belief systems based on Proto-Indo-European religion as well: Dyaus-Pita is cognate with Greek Zeus, Latin Jupiter (from deuspater), and Germanic Tyr; while Mitra is cognate with Persian *Mithra*; also, Ushas with Greek Eos and Latin Aurora; and, less certainly, Varuna with Greek Uranos. Finally, Agni is cognate with Latin *ignis* and Russian *ogon*, both meaning "fire".

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Some writers have traced astronomical references in the *Rigveda* dating it to as early as 4000 BC, a date well within the Indian Neolithic. Claims of such evidence remain controversial. Kazanas (2000) in a polemic against the "Aryan Invasion Theory" suggests a date as early as 3100 BC, based on an identification of the early Rigvedic Sarasvati River as the Ghaggar-Hakra and on glottochronological arguments. Being a polemic against mainstream scholarship, this is of course in diametral opposition to views in mainstream historical linguistics, which assumes a date as late as 3000 BC for the age of late Proto-Indo-European itself.

Flora and Fauna in the Rigveda: The horse (Asva) and cattle play an important role in the Rigveda. There are also references to the elephant (Hastin, Varana), Camel (Ustra, especially in Mandala 8), Buffalo (Mahisa), lion (Simha) and to the Gaur in the Rigveda. The peafowl (Mayura) and the Chakravaka (Anas casarca) are birds mentioned in the Rigveda.

More Recent Indian Views: The Hindu perception of the *Rigveda* has moved away from the original ritualistic content to a more symbolic or mystical interpretation. For example, instances of animal sacrifice are not seen as literal slaughtering but as transcendental processes. The Rigvedic view is seen to consider the universe to be infinite in size, dividing knowledge into two categories: *lower* (related to objects, beset with paradoxes) and *higher* (related to the perceiving subject, free of paradoxes). Swami Dayananda, who started the Arya Samaj and Sri Aurobindo have emphasized a spiritual (adhyatimic) interpretation of the book.

The Sarasvati river, lauded in RV 7.95 as the greatest river flowing from the mountain to the sea is sometimes equated with the Ghaggar-Hakra river, which went dry perhaps before 2600 BC or certainly before 1900 BC. Others argue that the Sarasvati was originally the Helmand in Afghanistan. These questions are tied to the debate about the Indo-Aryan migration (termed "Aryan Invasion Theory") vs. the claim that Vedic culture together with Vedic Sanskrit originated in the Indus Valley Civilization, a topic of great significance in Hindu nationalism, addressed for example by Amal Kiran and Shrikant G. Talageri. Subhash Kak has claimed that there is an astronomical code in the organization of the hymns. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, also based on astronomical alignments in the Rigveda, in his "The Orion" (1893) claimed presence of the Rigvedic culture in India in the 4th millennium BC, and in his "Arctic Home in the Vedas" (1903) even argued that the Aryans originated near the North Pole and came south during the Ice Age.

Samaveda

The Samaveda is third in the usual order of enumeration of the four Vedas, the ancient core Hindu scriptures. The Samaveda ranks next in sanctity and liturgical importance to the Rigveda or Veda of Recited praise. Its Sanhita, or metrical portion, consists chiefly of hymns to be chanted by the Udgatar priests at the performance of those important sacrifices in which the juice of the Soma plant, clarified and mixed with milk and other

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ingredients, was offered in libation to various deities. The Sama Veda was compiled around 1300-1000 BC.

The Collection is made up of hymns, portions of hymns, and detached verses, taken mainly from the Rigveda, transposed and rearranged, without reference to their original order, to suit the religious ceremonies in which they were to be employed. The verses are not intended to be chanted, but to be sung in specifically indicated melodies using the seven *svaras* or notes. Such songs are called Samagana and in this sense the Samaveda is really a book of hymns.

In these compiled hymns there are frequent variations, of more or less importance, from the text of the Rigveda as we now possess it which variations, although in some cases they are apparently explanatory, seem in others to be older and more original than the readings of the Rigveda. In singing, the verses are still further altered by prolongation, repetition and insertion of syllables, and various modulations, rests, and other modifications prescribed, for the guidance of the officiating priests, in the Ganas or Song-books. Two of these manuals, the Gramageyagana, or Congregational, and the Aranyagana or Forest Song-Book, follow the order of the verses of part I, of the Sanhita, and two others, the Uhagana, the Uhyagana, of Part II. This part is less disjointed than part I, and is generally arranged in triplets whose first verse is often the repetition of a verse that has occurred in part I.

The Samaveda survives in a single shakha or recension, the Kauthuma shakha, with a second shakha, Jaiminiya (or Talavakara), surviving fragmentarily, the Jaiminiya Samhita. From the Jaiminiya shakha, we also have the Jaiminiya Brahmana, the Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana and the Kena Upanishad.

Yajurveda

The Yajurveda is one of the four Hindu Vedas. It contains religious texts focusing on liturgy, rituals and sacrifices, and how to perform the same. The Yajurveda was probably written around 900 BCE.

Collections: There are two primary collections or *samhitas* of the Yajurveda: Shukla (white) and Krishna (black). Both contain the verses necessary for rituals, but the Krishna Yajurveda has additional prose commentary and detailed instructions within the work itself.

Krishna Yajurveda: There are four recensions of the Krishna ("black" or "dark") Yajurveda:

- *taittiraya sachita* (TS) of Panchala
- *maitrayani sachita* (MS)
- *caraka-katha sachita* (KS) of Madra
- *kapicmhala-katha sachita* (KapS) of Bahika

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Each of the recensions has a Brahmana associated with it, and some of them also have associated Shrautasutras, Grhyasutras, Aranyakas, Upanishads and Pratishakhyas.

The best known of these recensions is the TS, named after Tittiri, a pupil of Yaska. It consists of 8 books or *kandas*, subdivided in chapters or *prapathakas*, further subdivided into individual hymns. Some individual hymns in this Samhita have gained particular importance in Hinduism; *e.g.* TS 4.5 and TS 4.7 constitute the Shri Rudram Chamakam, while 1.8.6.1 is the Shaivaite Tryambakam mantra. The formula *bhkr bhuvas, suvas* prefixed to the (rigvedic) Gayatri mantra is also from the Yajurveda, appearing four times.

The Taittiriya Shakha: The Taittiriya Shakha (or branch) of the Krishna Yajur Veda is the *shakha* most prevalent in southern India. Among the followers of this Shakha, the Apastamba Sutras is the common Shrautasutra associated with the Shakha. The Taittiriya Shakha consists of Taittiriya Samhita (having seven kaandas), Taittiriya Braahmana (having three kaandas), Taittiriya Aaranyaka (having seven prashnas) (See Aranyaka Literature), Taittiriya Upanishad (having three *prashnas* or *vallis*-Sheeksha valli, Ananda valli and Bhrigu valli) and the Mahaanaarayana Upanishad. The Taittiriya Upanishad and Mahaanaarayana Upanishad are considered to be the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth prashnas of the Aaranyaka. The words *prapaathaka* and *kaanda* (meaning sections) are interchangeably used in the Vedic literature. *Prashna* and *valli* refer to sections of the Aaranyaka.

Shukla Yajurveda: There are two shakhas or recensions of the Shukla ("white" or "bright") Yajurveda:

- *Vajasaneyi Madhyandiniya*
- *Vajasaneyi Kanva* of Kosala

The former is popular in North India and Orissa, and thus commands a numerous following. The Kanva Shakha is popular in Karnataka, Kerala Andhrapradesh and Tamil Nadu. Jagadguru Adi Shankara is said to have followed the Kanva *Shakha* (recension). The Vedic rituals of the Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam, the biggest temple in India, are performed according to the latter *Shakha*. Kanva matha the only mutt formed on the basis of Veda known as Veda matha was established by saint Madhava thirtha during 1898 who got sanyasa ashrama by sri lakshmi manohara thirtha of sirur math of Udupi one of the ashtamata established by sage Madhvacharya to conduct pooja kainkaryas to lord Udupi Krishna the Kanva matha has its headquarter at Hunasihole at Gulbarga district of Karnataka state with sri sri Vidyabhaskara thirtha swamiji as its head now.

The Shukla Yajur Veda has two Upanishads associated with it: the Isa Vasya and the Brihadaranyaka upanishads. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the most voluminous of all Upanishads.

Legend: Legend has it that the vedic seer Yajnavalkya studied the Yajurveda collections under the tutelage of sage Vaishampayana maternal uncle of Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya's

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birth was with a purpose as purported by Gods. He was an 'Ekasandhigraahi' meaning he learns with just once teaching it self, he was too intelligent. The two came to have serious differences in interpretation. On one occasion, Vaishampayana was so enraged that he demanded the return of all the knowledge he has imparted to Yajnavalkya. Yagnavalkya regurgitated all the knowledge he had learnt in the form of flesh. The other disciples of Vaishampayana assumed the form of *tittiriya* birds and ate that flesh, eager to receive the knowledge.

Thus, that knowledge came to be called the Taittiriya Samhita (from the word *tittiriya*). There is a very secret meaning in this. As we know; it is impossible to regurgiate a knowledge or learning. But the words are used in 'srimad bhaagavata'. It is also of interest to know why the Guru him self did not taught the vedas he tought to yaajnyavalkya instead asked his disciples to eat the feelings. Any way, after having regurgitated out the knowledge acquired from his teacher, Yajnavalkya worshipped Surya (the Sun God) and acquired new knowledge directly from God Narayana (suryantargata narayana) who preached Shukla yajurveda by taking vaaji rupa, (god with horse face) which was compiled to become the *Shukla Yajurveda, this* is recorded in srimad bhaagavata. (haya, vaaji, ashwa, turaga are names referring horse in different lokaas)

Atharvaveda

The Atharvaveda is a sacred text of Hinduism, and one of the four Vedas, often called the "fourth Veda". According to tradition, the Atharvaveda was mainly composed by two groups of rishis known as the Bhrigus and the Angirasas. Additionally, traditions ascribes parts to other rishis, such as Kauyka, Vaycmha and Kacyapa. There are two surviving recensions (lkhs), known as Zaunakiya (AVS) and Paippalda (AVP). The fixation of the samhita texts of these recensions likely dates to roughly 600 BCE (the "Mantra" period of Vedic Sanskrit, and the following codification in Vedic shakhas).

Status: The Atharvaveda, while undoubtedly belonging to the core Vedic corpus, in some ways represents an independent parallel tradition to that of the Rigveda and Yajurveda. The Jaina and Buddha texts are considerably more hostile to the AV (they call it Aggvna or Ahavna Veda) than they are to the other Hindu texts. They even call it a non-Aryan Veda concocted by paippalda for human sacrifices. The Hindu texts too have taken a less than charitable view and have on occasions omitted the reference to the "Atharvn" text in the context of Vedic literature, though some attribute this to the fact that the Atharvaveda was a later addition chronologically. The Atharvan Parithas (appendices) themselves state that specific priests of the Mauda and Jalada schools should be avoided. It is even stated that women associated with Atharvn may suffer from abortions.

Recensions: The *Cara Gavyuha* (attributed to Shaunaka) lists nine shakhas or Schools of the Atharvaveda:

1. paippalda

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2. stauda
3. mauda
4. aunakiya
5. jjala
6. jalada
7. brahmavada
8. devadara
9. chraGavidy

Of these, only the Zaunakiya (AVS) and the Paippalda (AVP) recensions have survived. The core Paippalda text is considered earlier than the Zaunakiya, but both also contain later additions and corruptions. In places where the Zaunakiya and the Paippalda agree, it is likely the original version. Often, the two recensions in corresponding hymns have a different verse order, or either has additional verses missing from the other.

Additionally, from the Visnu and Vyu Puranas (older Hindu texts on the gods, goddesses and their histories) it may be possible to glean a few more ancient schools that were not listed in the *Cara Gavyuha*.

These are:

- sumantu
- kabandha
- kumuda
- aulkyana
- babhravya
- munjakea
- saindhavyana
- nakatrakalpa
- ntikalpa
- sachitvidhi

At least some of these may have evolved into the other schools mentioned in the Cara Gavyuha list. Sachitvidhi, Zntikalpa and Nakatrakalpa are the five *kalpa* texts adduced to the Zaunakiya tradition and not separate schools of their own.

There are two main circum-vedic texts associated with the AV, the vaitna sktra and the kauika sktra. These serve the same purpose as the vidhna of the Rigveda and are of greater value in studying the Puranic-Vedic link than the AV text itself. There are several Upanishads that are associated with the AV, but appear to be relatively late additions to the tradition. The most important amongst these are the munaka and the pracna Upanishads . The former contains an important reference to Zaunaka, the founder of the Shaunakiya shakha, the latter one is associated with the Paippalda shakha.

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Issues of Note

- The AV is the first Indic text dealing with medicine. It identifies the causes of disease as living causative agents such as the yatudhnya, the kimidi, the kimi and the duryama. The atharvns seek to kill them with a variety of drugs in order to counter the disease. This approach to disease is surprisingly advanced compared to the trimanual theory developed in the puranic era. Remnants of the original atharvnic thought did persist in the puranic era as can be seen in sucruta's medical treatise garu.
- Here following the atharvn theory the puranic text suggests germs as a cause for leprosy. In the same chapter sucruta also expands on the role of helminths in disease. These two can be directly traced back to the AV sachita. The hymn AVI. 23-24 describes the disease leprosy and recommends the rajaniaucadhi for its treatment. From the description of the aucadhi as black branching entity with dusky patches, it is very likely that is a lichen with antibiotic properties. Thus the AV can stake the claim for being one of the earliest texts to record uses of the antibiotic agents.
- The AV also informs us about warfare. A variety of devices such as the an arrow with a duct for poison (apskambha) and castor bean poison, poisoned net and hook traps, use of disease spreading bugs and smoke screens find a place in the AV sachita (eg. hymns IX .9, IX. 10, the triacdi and nyrbudi hymns). These references to military practices and associated katriya rites were what gave the AV its formidable reputation. In the Mahabharata era that shortly followed after the end of the atharvn period there is a frequent comparison between weapons and the mantras of the heroes. Probably, this comparison was initially supposed to mean the application of deadly weapons as mentioned in the atharvn tradition.
- Several regular and special rituals of the Aryans are a major concern of the AV, just as in the three other vedas. The major rituals covered by the AV are marriage in kc.
- There are also hymns that are specific to rituals of the bhigu-agnirasas, vaiyas and katriyas. One of the most important of these rites is the Vishsahi Vrata, performed to invoke the Indra and Visnu with the mantras of the XVIIth kc.
- The Vatya rituals were performed by individuals who took on a nomadic ascetic way of living and were generally sent into neighboring states by the ruler of a particular state. They appear to have served a role in reconnaissance and negotiations with neighboring states (compare with Arjuna's Vatya-like journey into the Yadu principality to woo Subhadra). Finally, there are some rituals aimed at the destruction of the enemies (Abhichrika hymns and rites) particularly using the closing mantras of the XVIth kc.
- While these support traditional negative views on the AV, in content they are mirrored by several other hymns from the Rig as well as the Yajuces. Moreover,

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Abhichrika rites were an integral part of the vedic as amply attested in the brhmana literature.

- Thus the AV as such began fully within the classic vedic fold, though it was more specific to certain clans of fire priests. The development of the Abhichrika rites to their more 'modern' form was seen only in the vidhna literature and in fact began within the Rigvedic tradition in the form of the aigvidhna. The author of the aigvidhna provides passing reference to the development of similar rites in the AV tradition (the references to the Agnirasa Kritys). These rites reached their culmination in the Kauaika and Vaitana Sktra and in some of the Pariaiahthas (appendices) of the atharvn literature. However, these are far removed from the actual hymns themselves suggesting that they represent an encrustation on the atharvanic practice rather than its original form. While in its most extreme form Atharvanic Abhichrika faded away, it did seed the mainstream Hindu culture resulting in the origin of the Puranic form of the fire ritual (yagas). It also provided the launching pad for the worship of late evolving popular deities like Kumara and Ganapati to capture the mainstream Hindu ritual.

Philosophical Excursions: The AV made the most important contributions to Aryan philosophical thought of all the Sachits. One of the most spectacular expressions of this is seen in the hymn XIII, the Hymn to goddess Earth or the Prithvi Skktam used in the Aghryana rite. The foundations of Vaiceaik, the highest of the Hindu Darmanas is expressed in the mantra XII. 1. 26 in which the atoms (Pmsu) are described forming the stone, the stones agglutinating to form the rocks and the rocks held together to form the Earth. An early pantheistic thought (somewhat convergent to the latter day Viciathadvaitins) is seen in the hymn X.7 that describes the common thread running through all manifest and unmanifest existence as the skacbha. This skacbha is described as what poured out of the Hiranya Garbha, that was the precursor of the complex world in a very simple form (X.7.28). (*Hiranya Garba)* The radiant or golden egg or womb. Esoterically the luminous 'fire mist' or ethereal stuff from which the Universe was formed.")

This Skambha is Indra and Indra is the Skambha which describes all existence. The hymn also describes a pantheistic nature of the Vedic gods (X.7.38): skacbha is the heat that spreads through the universe (Bhkvana) as waves of water; the units of this spreading entity are the gods even as branches of one tree. This one theme that repeatedly presents itself in various interpretations that abounded in later Hindu philosophies and can be considered one of the most fundamental expression of Vedic thought.

Dating: From alleged internal astronomical references (AVS XI.7), it has been surmised that the Atharvanic period included the time when the Pleiades occupied the spring equinox (roughly 2200 BC). Further, tradition suggests that paippalda, one of the early collators, and Vaidharbh, one of the late contributors associated with the Atharvanic text, lived during the reign of prince Hiranyanabha of the Ikshvku dynasty, interpreted to mean that the core AV composition was at least complete by 1500 BC.

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While these approaches are not widely accepted as valid, it is clear that the core text of the AV is not particularly recent in the Vedic Sachit tradition, and falls within the classical *Mantra period* of Vedic Sanskrit in the late 2nd millennium BC-roughly contemporary with the Yajurveda mantras, the Rigvedic Khilani, and the redaction of the Samveda. The Atharvaveda is also the first Indic text to mention Iron (as ayma ayas, literally "black metal"), so that scholarly consensus dates the bulk of the Atharvaveda hymns to the early Indian Iron Age, corresponding to the 12th to 10th centuries BC or the early Kuru kingdom.

During its oral tradition, however, the text has been corrupted by later additions considerably more than the other Vedas, and it is only from comparative philology of the two surviving recensions that the original reading may hoped to be approximated.

The Brahamans

The Brahmanas are part of the Hindu Shruti; They are composed in Vedic Sanskrit, and the period of their composition is sometimes referred to as the Brahmanic period or age (approximately between 900 BC and 500 BC). They are essentially commentaries of the Vedas, explaining Vedic ritual. The earliest Brahmanas may have been written several centuries earlier, contemporary to the Black Yajurveda commentary prose, but they have only survived in fragments.

Each Brahmana is associated with one of the four Vedas, and within the tradition of that Veda with a particular shakha or school:

Rigveda

- Shakala shakha: Aitareya Brahmana (AB)
- Bashkala shakha: Kaushitaki Brahmana (KS)

Samaveda

- Kauthuma: PB, Sadyb
- Jayminiya: Jayminiya Brahmana (JB)

Yajurveda

- Krishna: the Brahmanas are integrated into the samhitas:
- Maitrayani (MS)
- Charakakatha (CS)
- Kapisthalakatha (KS)
- Taittiriya (TS). The Taittiriya school has an additional Taittiriya Brahmana (TB)

Shukla

- Vajasaneyi Madhyandina: Shatapatha Brahmana, Madhyadina recension (ShB)
- Kanva: Shatapatha Brahmana, Kanva recension (ShBK)

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Atharvaveda

- Paippalada: Gopatha Brahmana

Aranyakas

The Aranyakas are part of the Hindu sruti; these religious scriptures are sometimes argued to be part of either the Brahmanas or Upanishads. The name translates to "the forest books", meaning, treatises for hermits or sadhus living in the wilderness. This contrasts with the grhyasutras, treatises intended for domestic life. Their language is early Classical Sanskrit, and together with the bulk of the Upanishads, the Aranyakas form the basis of Vedanta, roughly dating to a few centuries on either side of the beginning of the Common Era.

The Aranyakas discuss philosophy and sacrifice. They are believed to have originated with the various mystical ascetic groups that developed in post-Vedic India. The Aranyakas constitute a more philosophical and mystical interpretation of the themes presented in the Vedas, as opposed to the Brahmanas, which were primarily concerned with the proper performance of ritual. Like the Upanishads, the Aranyakas may have initially constituted a secret or hidden teaching, not in the sense of being forbidden or restricted, but rather being both a non-obvious expansion on the themes of the Vedas and a teaching that was primarily conveyed individually from teacher to student.

The Aranyakas are associated with and named after individual Vedic shakhas.

- Aitareya Aranyaka
- Taittiriya Aranyaka
- Katha Aranyaka
- Kaushitaki Aranyaka

The Upnishad

The Upanishads are part of the Hindu *Shruti* scriptures which primarily discuss meditation and philosophy and are seen as religious instructions by most forms of Hinduism. The very edifice of Indian religions (Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism) is built on the strong foundation of the Upanishads.

The Upanishads are mystic or spiritual contemplations of the Vedas, their putative end and essence, and thus known as *Vednta* ("the end of the Vedas"). The Sanskrit term *upanisad* derives from *upa-* (near), *ni-* (down) and *sad* (to sit), *i.e.* referring to the "sitting down near" a spiritual teacher (guru) in order to receive instruction in the Guru-shishya tradition or parampara. The teachers and students appear in a variety of settings (husband answering questions about immortality, a teenage boy being taught by Yama, etc.). Sometimes the sages are women and at times the instructions (or rather inspiration) are sought by kings. Most disciples are men, but not always. A woman disciple, Gargi Vacaknavi, drove the eminent sage Yajnavalkya to fury with her persistent unanswerable

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questions. The Upanishads have been dated to around 4th century BC. The oldest upanishads, *i.e.* the brihadaranyaka and chandogya upanishad, have been dated much older around the vedic period.

The Major Upanishads: Different Upanishads are formally affiliated with the four Vedas (Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda). The Upanishads were transmitted orally by the schools of Vedic recitation sakhas. The longest and oldest Upanishad are the Bahadranyaka and the Chndogya.

The language of the Upanishads is Sanskrit, the oldest among them still classifying as late Vedic Sanskrit. The oldest Upanishads, the Bahadranyakas and the Chndogya are composed in prose. These early texts may date back to the 8th-7th centuries BCE. Later followed a series of Upanishads composed in verse, such as the Katha, and bvetcvatara Upanishads. Reputedly, there were over two hundred *Upanishads*, but the philosopher and commentator Shankara only composed commentaries to eleven of them. The Upanishads commented on by Shankara are generally regarded as the oldest ones. The Muktika Upanishad lists 108 Upanishads. In 1656, at the order of Dara Shikoh, the Upanishads were translated from Sanskrit into Persian.

These philosophical and meditative tracts form the backbone of Hindu thought. Of the early Upanishads, the Aitareya and Kausitki belong to the Rig Veda, Kena and Chndogya to the Samaveda, and Bwhadrasyaka to the Yajurveda, and Pracna and Mundaka to the Atharvaveda. (Associated Upanishad and Vedic book information taken from Radhakrishnan Indian Philosophy, Vol. 1.) In addition, the Mundukya, Katho, bvetcvatara are very important. Others also include Mahnryana and Maitreyi Upanishads as key.

Place in the Hindu Canon: Scholarly breakdowns of the Vedic books see the four Vedas as poetic liturgy, collectively called mantra or samhit, adoration and supplication to the deities of Vedic religion, in parts already sort of melded with monist and henotheist notions, and an over arching order that transcended even the Gods. The *Brahmana* were a collection of ritual instructions, books detailing the priestly functions (which first were available to all men, and so concretized into strictly Brahmin privilege). These came after the Mantra.

In Vedanta, we have the *Aranyakas* and Upanishads. The Aranyaka ("of the forest") detail meditative yogic practices, contemplations of the mystic one and the manifold manifested principles. The Upanishad basically realized all the monist and universal mystical ideas that started in earlier Vedic hymns, and have exerted an influence unprecedented on the rest of Hindu and Indian philosophy. However, by adherents they are not considered philosophy alone, and form meditations and practical teachings for those advanced enough to benefit from their wisdom.

The Taittiriya Upanishad says this in the Ninth Chapter:

> He who knows the Bliss of *Brahman*, whence words together with the mind turn away, unable to reach It? He is not afraid of anything whatsoever.

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> He does not distress himself with the thought: "Why did I not do what is good? Why did I do what is evil?". Whosoever knows this regards both these as Atman; indeed he cherishes both these as Atman. Such, indeed, is the Upanishad, the secret knowledge of Brahman.

The Upanishads hold information on basic Hindu beliefs, including belief in a world soul, a universal spirit, Brahman, and an individual soul, Atman (Smith 10). A variety of lesser gods are seen as aspects of this one divine ground, Brahman (different from Brahma). Brahman is the ultimate, both transcendent and immanent, the absolute infinite existence, the sum total of all that ever is, was, or ever shall be. For Advaita philosophers Brahman is not a God in the monotheistic sense, as they do not ascribe to it any limiting characteristics, not even those of being and non-being, and this is reflected in the fact that in Sanskrit, the word brahman has no gender (masculine or feminine or neuter). Dvaita philosophy holds that Brahman is ultimately a personal God, Vishnu, or Krishna (*brahmano hi pratisthaham*, Bhagavad Gita 14.27).

"Who is the Knower?" "What makes my mind think?" "Does life have a purpose, or is it governed by chance?" "What is the cause of the Cosmos?" The sages of the Upanishad try to solve these mysteries and seek knowledge of a Reality beyond ordinary knowing. They also show a preoccupation with states of consciousness, and observed and analyzed dreams as well as dreamless sleep.

The Philosophy of the Upanishad: Due to their mystical nature and intense philosophical bent that does away with all ritual and completely embraces principals of One Brahman and the inner Atman, the Upanishads have a universal feel that has led to their explication in numerous manners, giving birth to the three schools of Vedanta.

Vedantin philosopher Adi Shankara summed up all the Upanishad in one phrase and said that in the end, the ultimate, formless, inconceivable Brahman is the same as our soul, Atman. We only have to realize it through discrimination and piercing through Maya.

A distinctive quotation that is indicative of the call to self-realization, one that inspired Somerset Maugham in titling a book he wrote on Christopher Isherwood, is as follows:

Get p! Wake up! Seek the guidance of an

Illumined teacher and realize the Self.

Sharp like a razor's edge is the path,

The sages say, difficult to traverse.

— Death Instructing Nachiketa in the *Katho (Word) Upanishad*

The Upanishads also contain the first and most definitive explications of aum as the divine word, the cosmic vibration that underlies all existence and contains multiple trinities of being and principles subsumed into its One Self. The *Isha* says of the Self (Verses 6, 7 & 8 of Isha Upanishad):

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Whoever sees all beings in the soul
and the soul in all beings
does not shrink away from this.
In whom all beings have become one with the knowing soul
what delusion or sorrow is there for the one who sees unity?
It has filled all.
It is radiant, incorporeal, invulnerable,
without tendons, pure, untouched by evil.
Wise, intelligent, encompassing, self-existent,
it organizes objects throughout eternity.

"*Aum Shanti Shanti Shanti*" This, too, is found first in the Upanishads, the call for tranquility, for divine stillness, for Peace everlasting.

Dara Shikoh, the Muslim sufi, and son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, translated the Upanishads in Persian in order to find in it elements of monotheism that might pave the way for a common mystical language between Islam and Hinduism.

The following is a list of the ten "principal" (mukhya) Upanishads that were commented upon by Shankara, and that are accepted as shruti by all Hindus. They are listed with their associated Veda (Rigveda (ZV), Samaveda (SV), White Yajurveda (ZYV), Black Yajurveda (KYV), Atharvaveda (AV)).

1. Aitareya (ZV)
2. Bahadranyaka (ZYV)
3. ca (ZYV)
4. Taittiraya (KYV)
5. Kamha (KYV)
6. Chndogya (SV)
7. Kena (SV)
8. Mug
9. aka (AV)
10. MG
11. kkya (AV)
12. Prayna (AV)

The Kauaitki, Zvetavatara and Maitryani Upanishads are sometimes added to extend the canon to 12 or 13. They are also the oldest Upanishads, likely all of them dating to before the Common Era. From linguistic evidence, the oldest among them are likely the Bwhadranyaka and Chndogya Upanishads, belonging to the late Vedic Sanskrit period; the remaining ones are at the transition from Vedic to Classical Sanskrit.

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Canon by Vedic Shakha: The older Upanishads are associated with Vedic Charanas (Shakhas or schools). The Aitareya Upanishad with the Shakala shakha, the Kauaitki Upanishad with the Bashakala shakha; the Chndogya Upanishad with the Kauthuma shakha, the Kena Upanishad, and the Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana, with the Jaiminiya shakha; the Kamha Upanishad with the Caraka-Katha shakha, the Taittiraya and Zvetavatara with the Taittiriya shakha; the Maitryani Upanishad with the Maitrayani shakha; the Bwhadranyaka and *ca Upanishads with the Vajasaneyi Madhyandina shakha, and the MG.

Kkya and Mug: aka Upanishads with the Shaunaka shakha. Additionally, parts of earlier texts, of Brahmanas or passages of the Vedas themselves, are sometimes considered Upanishads.

The Muktika Canon: The following is a list of the 108 canonical Upanishads of the Advaita school, according to the Muktika Upanishad (number 108), 1:30-39 (which does not list the associated Veda). In this canon,

- 10 Upanicads are associated with the Rigveda and have the Shnti beginning *vanme-manasi*.
- 16 Upanicads are associated with the Samaveda and have the Shnti beginning *pyyantu*.
- 19 Upanicads are associated with the White Yajurveda and have the Shnti beginning *pkrnamada*.
- 32 Upanicads are associated with the Black Yajurveda and have the Shnti beginning *sahanvavatu*.
- 31 Upanicads are associated with the Atharvaveda and have the Shnti beginning *bhadram-karnebhis*.

The first 10 are grouped as *mukhya* "principal", and are identical to those listed above. 21 are grouped as Smnya Vednta "common Vedanta", 23 as Sannysa, 9 as Shkta, 13 as Vaishnava, 14 as Shaiva and 17 as Yoga Upanishads.

1. "The Inner Ruler"
2. "Who moves the world?"
3. Death as Teacher"
4. "The Breath of Life"
5. Mug
6. "Two modes of Knowing"

7, 8. MG

9. "Consciousness and its phases"
10. "From Food to Joy"
11. "The Microcosm of Man"

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12. "Song and Sacrifice"
13. Bahadranyaka (ZYV, Mukhya)
14. Brahma (KYV, Sannyasa)
15. Kaivalya (KYV, Shaiva)
16. Jbla (ZYV, Sannyasa)
17. "The Faces of God"
18. Hassa (ZYV, Yoga)
19. runeya (SV, Sannyasa)
20. Garbha (KYV, Sannyasa)
21. Nryana (KYV, Vaishnava)
22. Paramahacsa (ZYV, Sannyasa)
23. Amatabindu (KYV, Yoga)
24. Amatanda (KYV, Yoga)
25. Zira (AV, Shaiva)
26. Atharvaikha (AV, Shaiva)
27. Maitryani (SV, Sannyasa)
28. Kauaitki (ZV, Samanya)
29. Bwhajjbla (AV, Shaiva)
30. Nasishatpan (AV, Vaishnava)
31. Klgnirudra (KYV, Shaiva)
32. Maitreyi (SV, Sannyasa)
33. Subla (ZYV, Samanya)
34. Kcurika (KYV, Yoga)
35. Mantrika (ZYV, Samanya)
36. Sarvasra (KYV, Samanya)
37. Nirlamba (ZYV, Samanya)
38. Zukarahasya (KYV, Samanya)
39. Vajraskchi (SV, Samanya)
40. Tejobindu (KYV, Sannyasa)
41. Ndabindu (ZV, Yoga) [1]
42. Dhynabindu (KYV, Yoga)
43. Brahmavidy (KYV, Yoga)
44. Yogatattva (KYV, Yoga)
45. Tmabodha (ZV, Samanya)
46. Parivrt (Nradaparivrjaka) (AV, Sannyasa)

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47. Triaikhi (ZYV, Yoga)
48. Sit (AV, Shakta)
49. Yogachk
50. Mani (SV, Yoga)
51. Nirvna (ZV, Sannyasa)
52. Mag
53. Alabrhmana (ZYV, Yoga)
54. Dakcinmkrti (KYV, Shaiva)
55. Zarabha (AV, Shaiva)
56. Skanda (Trip
57. Vibhkmi) (KYV, Samanya)
58. Mahnryana (AV, Vaishnava)
59. Advayatraka (ZYV, Sannyasa)
60. Rmarahasya (AV, Vaishnava)
61. Rmatpani (AV, Vaishnava)
62. Vsudeva (SV, Vaishnava)
63. Mudgala (ZV, Samanya)
64. ZG
65. Ilya (AV, Yoga)
66. Paiegala (ZYV, Samanya)
67. Bhikcu (ZYV, Sannyasa)
68. Mahad (SV, Samanya)
69. Zriraka (KYV, Samanya)
70. Yogaaikh (KYV Yoga)
71. Turiytita (ZYV, Sannyasa)
72. Sannysa (SV, Sannyasa)
73. Paramaha Csaparivrjaka (AV, Sannyasa)
74. Akcamlika (Mlika) (ZV, Shaiva)
75. Avyakta (SV, Vaishnava)
76. Ekkcara (KYV, Samanya)
77. Annapkrna (AV, Shakta)
78. Skrya (AV, Samanya)
79. Akci (KYV, Samanya)
80. Adhytm (ZYV, Samanya)
81. Kug

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82. Ika (SV, Sannyasa)
83. Svitri (SV, Samanya)
84. Tm (AV, Samanya)
85. Paupata (AV, Yoga)
86. Parabrahma (AV, Sannyasa)
87. Avadhkta (KYV, Sannyasa)
88. Devi (AV, Shakta)
89. Tripurtapani (AV, Shakta)
90. Tripura (ZV, Shakta)
91. Kamharudra (KYV, Sannyasa)
92. Bhvana (AV, Shakta)
93. Rudrahadaya (KYV, Shaiva)
94. Yogakun
95. Alini (KYV, Yoga)
96. Bhasma (AV, Shaiva)
97. Rudrkca (SV, Shaiva)
98. Ganapati (AV, Shaiva)
99. Daraana (SV, Yoga)
100. Trasra (ZYV, Vaishnava)
101. Mahvkya (AV, Yoga)
102. Pancabrahma (KYV, Shaiva)
103. Prngnihotra (KYV, Samanya)
104. Goplatpani (AV, Vaishnava)
105. Kacga (AV, Vaishnava)
106. Yjnavalkya (ZYV, Sannyasa)
107. Varha (KYV, Sannyasa)
108. Zmyyani (ZYV, Sannyasa)
109. Hayagriva (AV, Vaishnava)
110. Datttreya (AV, Vaishnava)
111. Gru
112. A (AV, Vaishnava)
113. Kali-Sagmrana (Kali) (KYV, Vaishnava)
114. Jbla (SV, Shaiva)
115. Saubhgya (ZV, Shakta)
116. Sarasvatirahasya (KYV, Shakta)

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117. Bahvaca (ZV, Shakta)
118. Muktika (ZYV, Samanya)

Smirti

Smriti refers to a specific body of Hindu religious scripture. *Smriti* also denotes non-*Shruti* texts generally, seen as secondary in authority to *Shruti*.

Categorization: Classifying the Smriti has been a contentious issue, even the names of proposed categories are debated. One such taxonomy follows:

1. Dharmasastra or the laws. This is represented by 18 books. Each book corresponds to an age of time.
2. Itihasa or the histories. This is represented by 4 books. It includes the Mahakavyas, or Epics Mahabharata and the Ramayana.
3. Purana or the writings. This is represented by 18 books. They are secondary scriptures that mainly focus on Vishnu or Shiva as the preferred supreme Deity.
4. Sutras or proverbs. This is represented by 6 categories of documents: the Shiksha, Vyakarana, Chandas, Nirukta, Jyotisha, & Kalpa.
5. Agama or the doctrines. There are three major divisions by doctrine: the Vaisnava, Saiva, and Sakta. Another way of grouping them is by Mantra, Tantra, and Yantra.
6. Darsana (aka Dyasana) or philosophies. This is represented by 6 schools of thought: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa, & Uttara Mimamsa (aka Vedanta).

Itihaas: Itihasa is the word for *History*. The word is also used in most other Indian languages, with the same meaning. The word is often used within India to refer to Hindu Epics, (aka Mahakavyas) such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata. It includes the Yogavasishtha and Harivamsa.

Itihasa can also Refer to the Puranas: Some historians may also accept this use, with a view to attribute historic veracity to such legends. This usage is eschewed by most historians because the dating of events alluded to in these legends, as also the substantiation of their historic veracity and accuracy, is generally impossible.

Chronology: The Itihasa-Purana is mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad. There are also references to the Puranas in the Atharvaveda 11.7.24 and the Satapatha Brahmana 11.5.6.8. and 13.4.3.13. There are probably also references to the Itihasa in the Nirukta. The Itihasa-Purana was considered to be almost as sacred and ancient as the Vedas. However, the ancient Itihasa-Purana was probably different from the later Itihasa and Puranas. Scholars argue that some contents of the Puranas may date to an earlier period.

Mahabharata

The is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the other being the *Ramayana*. With more than 74,000 verses, plus long prose passages, or some 1.8 million

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words in total, it is one of the longest epic poems worldwide. It is also of immense religious and philosophical importance in India , in particular for including the Bhagavad Gita, an important text of Hinduism.

The title may be translated as "the great tale of the Bharata Dynasty", according to the Mahabharata's own testimony extended from a shorter version simply called *Bhrata* of 24,000 verses The epic is part of the Hindu *itihsas*, literally "that which happened", along with the *Ramayana* and the *Purnas*.

Traditionally, the Mahabharata is ascribed to Vyasa. Due to its immense length, its philological study has a long history of attempting to unravel its historical growth and composition layers. In its final form, it is assumed to have been completed between the 3rd and 5th centuries, with its central core (consisting of only a fraction of the full 1.8 million words) going back as far as the 5th century BC.

Influence: With its vast philosophical depth and sheer magnitude, a consummate embodiment of the ethos of not only India but of Hinduism and Vedic tradition, the Mahabharata's scope and grandeur is best summarized by one quotation from the beginning of its first *parva* (section): "What is found here, may be found elsewhere. What is not found here, will not be found elsewhere."

In its scope, the Mahabharata is more than simply a story of kings and princes, sages and wisemen, demons and gods; its author, Vyasa, says that on of its aims is elucidating the four goals of life: kama (pleasure), artha (wealth), dharma (duty) and moksha (liberation).

The story culminates in moksha, believed by many Hindus to be the ultimate goal of human beings. Karma and dharma play an integral role in the Mahabharata.

The Mahabharata includes large amounts of Hindu mythology, cosmological stories of the gods and goddesses, and philosophical parables aimed at students of Hindu philosophy. Among the principal works and stories that are a part of the Mahabharata are the following (often considered isolated as works in their own right):

- Bhagavad Gita (Krishna instructs and teaches Arjuna. Anusasanaparva.)
- Damayanti (or Nala and Damayanti, a love story. Aranyakaparva.)
- Krishnavatara (the story of Krishna, the *Krishna Leela*, which is woven through many chapters of the story)
- Rama (an abbreviated version of the Ramayana. Aranyakaparva.)
- Rishyasringa (also written as Rshyashrnga, the horned boy and rishi. Aranyakaparva.)
- Vishnu sahasranama (the most famous hymn to Vishnu, which describes His 1000 names; Anushasanaparva.)

Textual History and Organization: It is undisputed that the full length of the Mahabharata has accreted over a long period. The Mahabharata itself (1.1.61) distinguishes a core portion of 24,000, the *Bharata* proper, as opposed to additional "secondary" material,

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and the Ashvalayana Grhyasutra (3.4.4) makes a similar distinction. Not unlike the field of Homeric studies, research on the Mahabharata has put an enormous effort into recognizing and dating various layers within the text. Oldenberg (1922) stipulated that the supposed original poem once carried an immense "tragic force", but dismissed the full text as a "horrible chaos".

The first testimony of the existence of the full text is an inscription at Khoh, dated to 533 BC, describing the Mahabharata as a "collection of 100,000 verses" (*shatasahasri samhita*). The redaction of this large body of text was carried out after formal principles, emphasizing the numbers 18 and 12. The addition of the latest parts may be dated by the absence of the *Anushasana-parva* from *MS Spitzer*, the oldest surviving Mahabharata manuscript dated to ca. 200 BC. From this evidence, it is likely that the redaction into 18 books took place in the 3rd or 4th century BC. An alternative division into 20 parvans appears to have coexisted for some time.

The division into 100 sub-parvans (mentioned in Mbh. 1.2.70) is older, and most parvans are named after one of their constituent sub-parvans. The Harivamsha consists of the final two of the 100 sub-parvans, and was considered an appendix (*khila*) to the Mahabharata proper by the redactors of the 18parvans.

The 18 division into parvans is as follows:

Parvan	*Title*	*Sub-parvans*	*Contents*
1	*Adi-parva*	1-19	Introduction, birth and upbringing of the princes.
2	*Sabha-parva*	20-28	Life at the court, the game of dice, and the exile of the Pandavas. Maya Danava erects the palace and court (*sabha*), at Indraprastha.
3	*Aranyaka-parva (also Vanaparva, Aranyaparva)*	29-44	The twelve years in exile in the forest (*aranya*).
4	*Virata-parva*	45-48	The year in exile spent at the court of Virata.
5	*Udyoga-parva*	49-59	Preparations for war.
6	*Bhishma-parva*	60-64	The first part of the great battle, with Bhishma as commander for the Kauravas.
7	*Drona-parva*	65-72	The battle continues, with Drona as commander.
8	*Karna-parva*	73	The battle again, with Karna as commander.

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Contd...

Parvan	Title	Sub-parvans	Contents
9	*Shalya-parva*	74-77	The last part of the battle, with Shalya as commander.
10	*Sauptika-...parva*	78-80	How Ashvattama and the remaining Kauravas killed the Pandava army in their sleep (Sauptika).
11	*Stri.....parva*	81-85	Gandhari and the other women (*stri*) lament the dead.
12	*Shanti-parva*	86-88	The crowning of Yudhisthira, and his instructions from Bhishma
13	*Anusasana-parva*	89-90	The final instructions (*anusasana*) from Bhishma.
14	*Ashvamedhika-parva*	91-92	The royal ceremony of the ashvamedha conducted by Yudhisthira.
15	*Ashramavasika-parva*	93-95	Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti leave for an ashram, and eventual death in the forest.
16	*Mausala-parva*	96	The infighting between the Yadavas with maces (*mausala*).
17	*Mahaprasthanika-parva*	97	The first part of the path to death (*mahaprasthana* "great journey") of Yudhisthira and his brothers.
18	*Svargarohana-parva*	98	The Pandavas return to the spiritual world (svarga).
khila			Harivamsaparva 99-100 life of Krishna.

The Adi-parvan is dedicated to the snake sacrifice (*sarpasattra*) of Jayamejaya, explaining its motivation, detailing why all snakes in existence were intended to be destroyed, and why in spite of this, there are still snakes in existence. This sarpasattra material was often considered an independent tale added to a version of the Mahabharata by "thematic attraction" (Minkowski 1991), and considered to have particularly close connection to Vedic (Brahmana literature), in particular the Panchavimsha Brahmana which describes the Sarpasattra as originally performed by snakes, among which are snakes named Dhrtarashtra and Janamejaya, two main characters of the Mahabharata's sarpasattra, and Takshaka, the name of a snake also in the Mahabharata. The Shatapatha Brahmana gives an account of an Ashvamedha performed by Janamejaya Parikshita.

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According to Mbh. 1.1.50, there were three versions of the epic, beginning with *Manu* (1.1.27), *Astika* (1.3, sub-parvan 5) or *Vasu* (1.57), respectively. These versions probably correspond to the addition of one and then another 'frame' settings of dialogues. The *Vasu* version corresponds to the oldest, without frame settings, beginning with the account of the birth of Vyasa. The Astika version adds the Sarpasattra and Ashvamedha material from Brahmanical literature, and introduces the name *Mahabharata* and identifies Vyasa as the work's author. The redactors of these additions were probably Pancharatrin scholars who according to Oberlies (1998) likely retained control over the text until its final redaction in the 3rd or 4th century BC. Mention of the Hunas in the *Bhishma-parva* appears to imply that the compilation of the text was still ongoing in 400 BC.

Historicity: The historicity of the events of the story is unclear. Many historians believe it to be a work of fiction. The epic's setting certainly has a historical precedent in Vedic India, where the Kuru kingdom was the center of political power in the late 2nd and early 1st millennia BC.

Ancient Indian scholars have calculated chronologies for the Mahabharata war, comparable to the Hellenistic attempts at a chronology of Greek mythology, the 5th century mathematician Aryabhatta arriving at an approximate date for the Kurukshetra battle of 3100 BC. Contentious and disputable attempts to date the events of the Mahabharata with the help of archaeoastronomy have claimed dates in the 6th millennium BC. According to the Puranas, there is a time gap of 1015 or 1500 years between Parikshit's birth during the Mahabharata war and the coronation of king Mahapadma Nanda (ca. 364-382 BC).

Synopsis: The epic employs the 'tale-within-tale' structure popular in many Indian religious and secular works. It is recited to the King Janamejaya by Vaishampayana, a disciple of Vyasa. The core story of the work is that of a dynastic struggle for the throne of Hastinapura, the kingdom ruled by the Kuru clan. The two collateral branches of the family that participate in the struggle are the Kauravas, the elder branch of the family, and the Pandavas, the younger branch.

The struggle culminates leading to the Great battle of Kurukshetra, and the Pandavas are ultimately victorious. The Mahabharata itself ends with the death of Krishna, and the subsequent end of his dynasty, and ascent of the Pandava brothers to Heaven. It also marks the beginning of the Hindu age of Kali (Kali Yuga), the fourth and final age of mankind, where the great values and noble ideas have crumbled, and man is speedily heading toward the complete dissolution of right action, morality and virtue. Some of the most noble and revered figures in the Mahabharat end up fighting on the side of the Kauravas, due to conflicts of their dharma, or duty. For example, Bhishma had vowed to always protect the king of Hastinapur, whoever he may be. Thus, he was required to fight on the side of evil knowing that his Pandavas would end up victorious only with his death.

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Authorship: The epic is traditionally ascribed to Maha Rishi Veda Vyasa, who is one of the major dynastic characters within the epic. The first section of the Mahabharata states that it was Ganesha who, at the behest of Vyasa, fixed the text in manuscript form. Lord Ganesha is said to have agreed, but only on condition that Vyasa never pause in his recitation. Vyasa then put a counter-condition that Ganesha understand whatever he recited, before writing it down. In this way Vyasa could get some respite from continuously speaking by saying a verse which was difficult to understand. This situation also serves as a popular variation on the stories of how Ganesha's right tusk was broken (a traditional part of Ganesha imagery). This version attributes it to the fact that, in the rush of writing, the great elephant-headed divinity's pen failed, and he snapped off his tusk as a replacement in order that the transcription not be interrupted.

Bhishma: Janamejaya's ancestor Shantanu, the king of Hastinapur has a short-lived marriage with the goddess Ganga and has a heroic son, Bhishma. Many years later, when the king goes hunting, he spots Satyavati, the daughter of a fisherman and wants to marry her. The fisherman says that he will agree only on one condition-that her son should ascend the throne of Hastinapur. Bhishma, his son by his first wife, renounces his right to the throne and vows to be a lifelong celibate, so that Satyavati's son can be the king. Such a vow was unheard of amongst warrior dynasties thus inspiring the name Bhishma- 'the person of the terrible oath'.

The Pandavas: Unfortunately Satyavati's sons die young and her grandson Pandu ascends the throne as his elder brother Dhritarashtra is blind. But this king is cursed with a terrible fate- if he ever makes love to a woman, he will die. He retires to the forest along with his two wives. Using a magical spell to summon the gods, his elder queen Kunti gives birth to three sons Yudhishthira, Arjuna and Bhima. His younger queen, Madri bears the twins Nakula and Sahadeva. Pandu and Madri cannot resist temptation, and die in the forest and Kunti returns to Hastinapura with her sons. The rivalry between the Pandavas and the Kauravas start from childhood itself. Dhritarashtra's sons, the Kauravas, led by the eldest Duryodhana, detest their cousins. However, they were the favorite of their teacher Drona and (the Pandavas) grow up to be exceptional. Each one of the Pandavas is said to have one exceptional strength or virtue-Yudhishthira is the wisest and most virtuous, Arjuna the bravest warrior, Bhima the strongest and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva are endowed with exceptional beauty.

When the princes come of age, a tournament is held to display the strength and specialities of the princes of Hastinapur. When Arjuna was hailed as a master of archery, a young man challenges him for a duel. He declares his name is Karna, and he was the son of the charioteer. When asked to prove that his birth is of royal birth, which is the criterion for joining the tournament, Duryodhana, spotting a potential ally, jumps over to his side and gives his kingdom of Angawardana. Karna is forever grateful for this act. Because of this, he becomes Duryodhana's closest friend and plays a crucial role in the upcoming war.

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Draupadi: Meanwhile Duryodhana plots to get rid of the Pandavas and tries to kill the Pandavas secretly by burning their palace which is made of lac. However, the Pandavas are warned and escape from the palace. They live in hiding for sometime. In course of this exile Arjuna wins the hand of the Panchala princess Draupadi. When he returns with his bride, Arjuna goes to his mother to show her his prize, exclaiming, "Mother, see what I have won!". Kunti, not noticing the princess, tells Arjuna that whatever he has won must be shared with his brothers. To ensure that their mother never utters a falsehood even by mistake, the brothers take her as a common wife. All of the Pandavas love Draupadi dearly. In some interpretations, Draupadi alternates months or years with each brother. At this juncture they also meet Krishna, a close friend of Draupadi, who would become their lifelong ally and guide.

Duryodhana's Game: Duryodhana, who now has a friend in the peerless warrior Karna, resigns to the coming back of the Pandavas with their new royal ally. Soon they conquer the whole of India and its adjoining regions and Yudhishthira is crowned the emperor. This proves too much for Duryodhana who feels death would be better than watching one's foes prosper. His maternal uncle Shakuni, convinced that however brave his nephew may be, he was no match for his cousins, decides to use a ruse to destroy the Pandavas. He forces Dhritarashtra to invite the Pandavas for a game of dice in which he wins everything from Yudhishthira, including himself, his brothers and Draupadi through the use of a trick. The jubilant Kauravas insult them in their helpless state and even try to strip Draupadi. Her honour is saved by the grace of Krishna. When the elders intervene and Dhritarashtra has to restore everything to the Pandavas, Shakuni forces another game of dice which he again wins. The Pandavas are required to go into exile for 13 years, and on the 13th year they must remain hidden. If discovered by the Kauravas, they will be forced into exile for another 13 years.

The Battle at Kurukshetra: When the Pandavas after many hardships and exile request for at least five villages for the five brothers from their vast kingdom, Duryodhana refuses to give in. Krishna goes to broker peace but fails. War was inevitable. The two sides summon vast armies to their help and line up at Kurukshetra for a war. The Kingdoms of Dwaraka, Kasi, Kekaya, Magadha, Matsya, Chedi, Pandya and the Yadus of Mathura and some other clans like the Parama Kambojas from Transoxiana were allied with the Pandavas; the allies of the Kauravas comprised the kings of Pragjyotisha, Anga, Kekaya (Kekaya brothers who were enemies of the Kekeya brothers on the Pandava side), Sindhudesa (including Sindhus, Sauviras and Sivis), Mahishmati, Avanti in Madhyadesa, Madras, Gandharas, Bahlikas, Kambojas (with Yavanas, Sakas, Tusharas etc.) and many others. Seeing himself facing grandsire Bhishma and his teacher Drona on Duryodhana's side due to their vow to serve the state of Hastinapur, Arjuna is heartbroken at the idea of killing them. Krishna who has chosen to drive Arjuna's chariot wakes him up to his call of duty in the famous Bhagavad Gita section of the epic. Though initially sticking to chivalrous notions of warfare, the Kauravas and Pandavas soon descended into

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dishonourable warfare. At the end of the 18 days slaughter only the Pandavas and Krishna survive with a few old warriors from the Kaurava side.

The End of the Pandavas: Beholding the carnage, the noble mother of the Kauravas, Gandhari who had lost all her sons, curses Krishna to be a witness to a similar annihilation of his family, for though divine and capable of stopping the war, he had not done so. Krishna who had incarnated precisely to destroy the wicked kings accepts the curse, which bears fruit 36 years later. He then departs from the world and the Pandavas who had ruled righteously all along, now tired, decide to renounce everything. Clad in skins and rags they retire to the Himalayas and ascend the peaks. One by one they get exhausted, die and ascend to heaven. Only the virtuous Yudhisthira who had tried everything to prevent the carnage and never very happy with his kingship afterwards, ascends to the heaven in his physical body.

Arjuna's grandson Parikshita rules after them and dies bitten by a snake. His furious son, Janamejaya, decides to perform a snake sacrifice (sarpasattra) in order to destroy the snakes. It is at this sacrifice that the tale of his ancestors is narrated to him.

Bhagbatgita: The Bhagavad Gita is an ancient Sanskrit text comprising of some 700 verses from the epic work known as Mahabharata (*Bhishma Parva* chapters 23 – 40). The verses, using the range and style of Sanskrit meter (poetry) (*chhanda*) with similes and metaphors, are very poetic; hence the title, which translates to "the Song of the Divine One", of Bhagavan in the form of Krishna. It is revered as sacred by the majority of Hindu traditions, and especially so by followers of Krishna. In general speech it is commonly reerred to as *The Gita*

The content of the Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna taking place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra just prior to the start of a climactic war. Responding to Arjuna's confusion and moral dilemma, Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties and elaborates on number of different Yogic and Vedantic philosophies, with examples and analogies. This has led to the Gita often being described as a concise guide to Hindu philosophy. During the discourse, Krishna reveals his identity as the Supreme Being Himself (Bhagavan), blessing Arjuna with an awe-inspiring glimpse of His divine absolute form.

The Bhagavad Gita is also called *Gitopanicad*, implying it to be an 'Upanishad'. While technically it is considered a *Smati* text, it has singularly achieved the status of *sruti*, or *revealed knowledge*.

Background: *The Bhagavad Gita* describes the mind as turbulent and obstinate. 'The Chariot of the Body': The five horses represent the five senses (tongue, eyes, nose, ears and skin). The rein symbolises the mind, the driver is the intelligence, and the passenger is the spirit soul.The discourse on the Bhagavad Gita begins before the start of the climactic battle at Kurukshetra. It begins with the pandava prince Arjuna, as he becomes filled with doubt on the battlefield. Realising that his enemies are his own relatives,

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beloved friends, and revered teachers, he turns to his charioteer and guide, Sri Krishna (an avatar of Sri Vishnu), for advice.

Krishna counsels Arjuna, beginning with the tenet that the soul is both eternal and immortal. Any 'death' on the battlefield would involve only the shedding of the body but the inner soul is permanent. Krishna goes on to expound on the yogic paths of devotion, action, meditation and knowledge. Fundamentally, the Bhagavad Gita proposes that true enlightenment comes from growing beyond identification with the Ego, the 'False Self', and that one must identify with the Truth of the immortal Self, (the soul or Atman). Through detachment from the material sense of Ego, the Yogi, or follower of a particular path of Yoga, is able to transcend his illusory mortality and attachment from the material world and enter into the realm of the Supreme.

To demonstrate his divine nature, Krishna grants Arjuna the boon of cosmic vision (albeit temporary) and allows the prince to see His 'Universal Form'. He reveals that He is fundamentally both the ultimate essence of *Being* in the universe, and also its material body. This is called the Vishvarupa/Viratrupa.

The Gita refers to the war as Dharma Yuddha, meaning a just war. Chapter 4, verse 7, clearly states that God takes incarnation to establish righteousness in the world.

Dating of the Text: Though it is not exactly clear when the Bhagavad Gita was written, the majority of historians give dates around 50 BCE-500 BCE. There is, however, considerable debate on the subject. Based on the differences in the poetic styles and the external influences such as Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, certain scholars have expressed the opinion that Bhagavad Gita was added to the *Mahabharata* at a later date. Again, there are other theories based on astronomical calculations cited in the Mahabharata that place the incidents upon which the Gita is based around the time 5561 BCE. The latter date corresponds with traditional knowledge and reflects the beliefs of many devotional Hindus.

The Scripture of Yoga: The Gita addresses the discord between the senses and the intuition of cosmic order. It speaks of the Yoga of equanimity, a detached outlook. The term Yoga covers a wide range of meanings, but in the context of the Bhagavad Gita, describes a unified outlook, serenity of mind, skill in action, and the ability to stay attuned to the glory of the Self (Atman), which is of the same essence as the basis of Being (Brahman). According to Krishna, the root of all suffering and discord is the agitation of the mind caused by selfish desire. The only way to douse the flame of desire is by simultaneously stilling the mind through self discipline and engaging oneself in a higher form of activity.

However, abstinence from action is regarded as being just as detrimental as extreme indulgence. According to the Bhagavad Gita, the goal of life is to free the mind and intellect from their complexities, and to focus them on the glory of the Self, by dedicating one's actions to the divine. This goal can be achieved through the Yogas of meditation, action, devotion and knowledge. The Gita describes the best Yogi as one who constantly

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comtemplates God. Krishna summarizes the Yogas through eighteen chapters. There are four kinds of Yoga-Raja Yoga or *Psycho-Physical Meditation*, Bhakti Yoga or *Devotion*, Karma Yoga or *Selfless Action*, and Jnana Yoga or *Self Transcending Knowledge*.

While each path differs, their fundamental goal is the same-to realize Brahman (the ***Divine Essence***) as being the ultimate truth upon which our material universe rests, that the body is temporal, and that the *Supreme Soul* (Paramatman) is infinite. Yoga's aim (nirvana or moksha) is to escape from the cycle of reincarnation through realization of oneness with the ultimate reality. There are three stages to self-realisation enunciated from the Bhagavad Gita:

1. Brahman-The impersonal universal energy
2. Paramatma-The Supreme Soul sitting in the heart of every living entity.
3. Bhagavan-God as a personality, with a transcendental form.

The below are quotations from Krishna concerning the four principle yogas of the Bhagavad Gita:

On the Goal of Yoga: " And whoever, at the time of death, quits his body, remembering Me (Krishna) alone, at once attains My (Krishna's- Transcendental) nature. Of this there is no doubt."

On Bhakti Yoga: Put simply, Bhakti Yoga is *Service in Love and Devotion to God* (Krishna in the context of the Bhagavad Gita).

> *"I consider the Yogi-devotee-who lovingly contemplates on Me with supreme faith, and whose mind is ever absorbed in Me-to be the best of all the Yogis". "After attaining Me, the great souls do not incur rebirth in this miserable transitory world, because they have attained the highest perfection." "... those who, renouncing all actions in Me, and regarding Me as the Supreme, worship Me... For those whose thoughts have entered into Me, I am soon the deliverer from the ocean of death and transmigration, Arjuna. Keep your mind on Me alone, your intellect on Me. Thus you shall dwell in Me hereafter." "And he who serves Me with the yoga of unswerving devotion, transcending these qualities [binary opposites, like good and evil, pain and pleasure] is ready for liberation in Brahman." "Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, offer service to Me, bow down to Me, and you shall certainly reach Me. I promise you because you are My very dear friend." "Setting aside all meritorious deeds (Dharma), just surrender completely to My will (with firm faith and loving contemplation). I shall liberate you from all sins. Do not fear."*

On Karma Yoga: Karma Yoga is essentially *Acting, or doing one's duties in life as per his / her* dharma, *or duty, without concern of results*-a sort of constant sacrifice of action to the Supreme. It is action done without thought of gain. In a more modern interpretation, it can be viewed as duty bound deeds done without letting the nature of the result affecting

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ones actions. It is said that the results can be of 3 types- as aimed for, opposite of what is aimed for, or a mixture of these. If one can perform his duties (as prescribed in the Vedas) without any anticipation of the result of his actions, he is bound to succeed. It includes, but is not limited to, dedication of one's chosen profession and its perfection to God. It is also visible in community and social service, since they are inherently done without thought of personal gain.

Krishna advocates Nishkam Karma Yoga (the Yoga of Selfless Action) as the ideal path to realize the Truth. Allocated work done without expectations, motives, or thinking about its outcomes tends to purify one's mind and gradually makes an individual fit to see the value of reason and the benefits of renouncing the work itself. These concepts are vividly described in the following verses:

> *"To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction"*
>
> — verse 47, Chapter 2-Samkhya theory and Yoga practise, The Bhagavadgita-*Radhakrishnan*
>
> *"Fixed in yoga, do thy work, O Winner of wealth(Arjuna), abandoning attachment, with an even mind in success and failure, for evenness of mind is called yoga"*
>
> — verse 48, Chapter 2-Samkhya theory and Yoga practise, The Bhagavadgita-*Radhakrishnan*
>
> *"With the body, with the mind, with the intellect, even merely with the senses, the Yogis perform action toward self-purification, having abandoned attachment. He who is disciplined in Yoga, having abandoned the fruit of action, attains steady peace..."*

In order to achieve true liberation, it is important to control all mental desires and tendencies to enjoy and sense pleasures. The following verses illustrate this:

"When a man dwells in his mind on the object of sense, attachment to them is produced. From attachment springs desire and from desire comes anger."

"From anger arises bewilderment, from bewilderment loss of memory; and from loss of memory, the destruction of intelligence and from the destruction of intelligence he perishes"

On Jnana Yoga: Jnana Yoga is a process of learning to discriminate between what is real and what is not, what is eternal and what is not. Through a steady advancement in realization of the distinction between Real and the Unreal, the Eternal and the Temporal, one develops into a *Jnana Yogi*. This is essentially a path to God through knowledge and discrimination. "When he perceives the various states of being as resting in the One, and from That alone spreading out, then he attains Brahman. / They who

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know, through the eye of knowledge, the distinction between the field and the knower of the field, as well as the liberation of beings from material nature, go to the Supreme."

On Raja Yoga: Raja Yoga is the stilling of the mind and body through meditating techniques, geared at realizing one's true nature. This practice was later described by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras.

"To practice yoga, one should go to a secluded place and should lay kusa grass on the ground and then cover it with a deerskin and a soft cloth. The seat should be neither too high nor too low and should be situated in a sacred place. The yogi should then sit on it very firmly and practice yoga to purify the heart by controlling his mind, senses and activities and fixing the mind on one point. One should hold one's body, neck and head erect in a straight line and stare steadily at the tip of the nose. Thus, with an unagitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear, completely free from sex life, one should meditate upon Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life. Thus practicing constant control of the body, mind and activities, the mystic transcendentalist, his mind regulated, attains to the kingdom of God [or the abode of Krishna] by cessation of material existence."

Influence of the Bhagavadgita: In many ways seemingly a heterogeneous text, the Gita reconciles many facets and schools of Hindu philosophy, including those of Brahmanical (*i.e.*, orthodox Vedic) origin and the parallel ascetic and Yogic traditions. It comprises primarily Vedic (as in the four Vedas, as opposed to the Upanishads/Vedanta), Upanishadic, Sankhya and Yogic philosophies. For its religious depth, quintessential Upanishadic and Yogic philosophy and beauty of verse, the Bhagavad Gita is one of the most compelling and important texts of the Hindu tradition. It is considered by many as one of the world's greatest religious and spiritual scriptures.

It had always been a creative text for Hindu priests and Yogis. Although it is not strictly part of the 'canon' of Vedic writings, almost all Hindu traditions draw upon the Gita as authoritative. Some claim that it may have been inserted into the Mahabharata at a later date, but this is only natural as it sounds more like an Upanishad (which are commentaries that followed the Vedas) in thought than a Purana (histories), of which tradition the Mahabharata is a part.

For the Vedantic schools of Hindu philosophy, it belongs to one of the three foundational texts (Sanskrit: Prasthana Trayi, literally three points of departure) (the other two being the Upanishads and Brahma Sutras). Every such school is required to have a commentary on the three. The oldest available commentary is from Adi Shankara but he mentions older commentators. He is followed by classical commentators like Anandagiri, Shridhara Swami, Madhuskdana Sarasvati, Ramanuja, Madhvacharya, Nimbarka, Vallabha and Dnyaneshwar. While the traditional text commented upon by many scholars, including Adi Shankara and Ramanuja, consists of 700 verses, a recension of the text from Kashmir has an additional 15. The renowned philosopher Abhinavagupta (10-11th century BC) has written a commentary on this recension called Gitartha-Samgraha. Other ancient and

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medieval scholars (like Vedanta Desika in the Tatparya-Chandrika) seem to be aware of such additional verses but prefer not to comment on them.

Among the great sages and philosophers who have drawn inspiration from the Bhagavad Gita is Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who initiated public singing of the "Hare Krishna" mantra. Mahatma Gandhi derived great moral strength from Bhagavad gita, which is evident in his words:

"The Geeta is the universal mother. I find a solace in the Bhagavadgeeta that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies-and my life has been full of external tragedies-and if they have left no visible or indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teaching of Bhagavad Gita."

Swami Vivekananda, the follower of Sri Ramakrishna, was known for his commentaries on the four Yogas-Bhakti, Jnana, Karma and Raja Yoga. He drew from his knowledge of the Gita to expound on these Yogas. Swami Sivananda advises the aspiring Yogi to read verses from the Bhagavad Gita every day. Paramahamsa Yogananda, writer of the famous "Autobiography of a Yogi", viewed the Bhagavad Gita as one of the world's most divine scriptures.

A minority of Hindus, belonging to Saivite and Shakti-centered sects, reject the Gita's authority. Upon witnessing the world's first atomic blast in 1945, J. Robert Oppenheimer, American physicist and dirctor of the Manhattan Project, is reported to have quoted "I am become Death, the shatterer of worlds".

Ramayana

The *Ramayana* is a Sanskrit epic attributed to the poet Valmiki and is an important part of the Hindu canon (*smrti*). The name *Ramayana* is a tatpurusha compound of *Rma* and *ayana* "going, advancing", translating to "the travels of *Rama*" . The *Ramayana* consists of 24,000 verses in seven cantos (*knas*) and tells the story of a prince, Rama of Ayodhya, whose wife Sita is abducted by the demon (*Rkshasa*) king of Lanka, Rvana. In its current form, the Valmiki Ramayana is dated variously from the 5th century to the 1st centuries BCE, or about coeval to early versions of the *Mahabhrata*. As with most traditional epics, since it has gone through a long process of interpolations and redactions, it is impossible to date it accurately. The Ramayana had an important influence on later Sanskrit poetry, primarily through its establishment of the Sloka meter. But, like its epic cousin Mahabhrata, the Ramayana is not just an ordinary story. It contains the teachings of ancient Hindu sages and presents them through allegory in narrative and the interspersion of the philosophical and the devotional. The characters of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Hanumn and Rvana (the villain of the piece) are all fundamental to the cultural consciousness of India.

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One of the most important literary works on ancient India, the Ramayana has had a profound impact on art and culture in the Indian Subcontinent. The story of Rama also inspired a large amount of later-day literature in various languages, notable among which are the works of the sixteenth century Hindi poet Tulsidas and the Tamil poet Kambar of the 13th century. The Ramayana is not just a Hindu religious tale. Starting from the 8th century, the colonisation of Southeast Asia by Indians began. Several large empires like the Khmers, the Majapahits, the Sailendras, the Champas and Sri Vijaya were established. Because of this, the Ramayana became popular in Southeast Asia and manifested itself in text, temple architecture and performance, particularly in Indonesia (Java, Sumatra and Borneo), Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Laos.

Structure of Valmiki Ramayana: Valmiki's *Ramayana*, the oldest and most widely read version of Ramayana is the basis of all the various version of Ramayana that are prevalent in the various cultures. The text survives in numerous complete and partial manuscripts, the oldest surviving of which is dated from the eleventh century BC. The current text of Valmiki Ramayana has come down to us in two regional versions from the north and the south of India. Valmiki Ramayana has been traditionally divided into seven books, dealing with the life of Rama from his birth to his death.

1. Bala Kanda – Book of the young Rama which details the miraculous birth of Rama, his early life in Ayodhya, his slaying of the demons of the forest at the request of Vishvamitra and his wedding with Sita.
2. Ayodhya Kanda – Book of Ayodhya in which Dasharatha comes to grief over his promise to Kaikeyi and the start of Rama's exile.
3 Aranya Kanda – Book of the Forest which describes Rama's life in the forest and the abduction of Sita by Ravana.
4. Kishkinda Kanda – Book of Kishkinda, the Vanara kingdom in which Rama befriends Sugriva and the Vanara army and begins the search for Sita.
5. Sundara Kanda – Book of Sundara (Hanuman) in which Hanuman travels to Lanka and finds Sita imprisoned there and brings back the good news to Rama.
6. Yuddha Kanda – Book of the War, which narrates the Rama-Ravana war and the return of the successful Rama to Ayodhya and his coronation.
7. Uttara Kanda – Epilogue, which details the life of Rama and Sita after their return to Ayodhya, Sita's banishment and the eventual demise of Sita and Rama.

There have been speculations on whether the first and the last chapters of Valmiki's *Ramayana* were indeed written by the original author. Many experts are of the opinion that they are integral part of the book in spite of the many differences in style and some contradictions in content between these two chapter and the rest of the book. These two chapters contain most of the mythological interpolations found in the Ramayana, such as the miraculous birth of Rama and his divine nature as well as the numerous legends surrounding Ravana.

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Main Characters Of Ramayana:

- Rama is the hero of this epic tale. He is portrayed as an incarnation of the god Vishnu. He is the eldest and the favourite son of the King of Ayodhya, Dasharatha. He is a popular prince loved by one and all. He is the epitome of virtue. Dasaratha, forced by one of his wives Kaikeyi commands Rama to relinquish his right to the throne and go into exile by his father. While in exile, Rama kills the demon king Ravana.
- Sita is the wife of Rama and the daughter of king Janaka. Sita is the epitome of womanly purity and virtue. She follows her husband into exile and there gets abducted by Ravana. She is imprisoned in the island of Lanka by Ravana. Rama rescues her by defeating the demon king Ravana.
- Hanuman is a monkey (*Vanara*) belonging to the monkey kingdom of Kishkinda. He worships Rama and helps find Sita by going to the kingdom of Lanka crossing the great ocean.
- Lakshmana, the younger brother of Rama, chose to go into exile with him. He spend his time protecting Sita and Rama. He is deceived by Ravana and Maricha into believing that Rama was in trouble while Sita gets abducted.
- Ravana is a demon who is the king of Lanka. He received a boon from Brahma the he will not be killed by either gods, demons or by spirits, after performing a severe penance for ten thousand years. He has ten heads and twenty arms. After getting his reward from Brahma, Ravana begins to lay waste the earth and disturbs the deeds of good Brahmins. Rama is born a human to defeat him, thus overcoming the boon given by Brahma.
- Dasharatha is the king of Ayodhya and the father of Rama. He has three queens, Kousalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, and three other sons, Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Kaikeyi, Dasharatha's favourite queen forces him to make his son Bharata heir apparent and send Rama into exile. Dashatara dies heartbroken after Rama goes into exile.
- Bharata is the second son of Dasharata. When he learns that his mother Kaikeyi had forced Rama into exile and caused Dasharata to die broken hearted, he storms out of the palace and goes in search of Rama. When Rama refuses to break his exile to return to the capital to assume the throne, he requests and gets Rama's sandals and places them on the throne.
- Vishwamitra is the sage who takes Rama into the forest at the behest of defeating the demons destroying his Vedic sacrifices. On the way back he takes Rama into Mithila where Rama sees and falls in love with Sita.

Synopsis: Rama, the hero of *Ramayana*, is a popular deity worshiped by Hindus, the route of his wanderings being, each year, trodden by devout pilgrims. The poem is not a mere literary monument, it is a part of Hinduism, and is held in such reverence that

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the mere reading or hearing of it, or certain passages of it, is believed by the Hindus to free them from sin and grant every desire to the reader or hearer. According to Hindu tradition, is an incarnation (Avatar), of the god Vishnu, who is part of the Hindu Trinity. The main purpose of this incarnation is to demonstrate the righteous path (dharma) for the life on earth.

Rama's Youth: Brahma, creator of the universe, could not revoke a boon he gave the demon king Ravana, as a reward for his severe penances, that he should not be slain by gods, demons, or spirits. Having been then rewarded, Ravana began with the help of his evil supporters, the *Rakshasas*, to lay waste the earth and to do violence to the good, especially the Brahmin priests, disturbing their sacrifices. All the gods, watching this devastation, went to Brahma to find a way to deliver themselves and the earth of this evil. Brahma went to Vishnu and conveyed the anguish of the gods and requested that Vishnu incarnate on earth as a human to destroy Ravana, as Ravana had not asked for protection against humans or beasts in his wishes to Brahma.

Meanwhile, the good king Dasharatha of Ayodhya, who had ruled over his kingdom of Kosala for a long time, was beginning to become anxious about his successor, for he had no sons to take over the kingdom after him. Taking advice from his ministers and priests Dasharatha organised a *Putrakameshti Yagna*, a sacrifice for progeny. Vishnu decided to be born as the eldest to Dasharatha and caused a divine being to emerge from the sacrificial fire. The divine being gave Dashratha a golden vessel filled with nectar and asked him to give it to his queens. Dasharatha divided it amongst his three queens, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. In due course they became pregnant and gave birth to four sons: Queen Kausalya gives birth to the eldest son, Rama. Bharata is born to Queen Kaikeyi, and twins, Lakshmana and Shatrughna, are born to Queen Sumitra.

The boys grew up learning the scriptures and the art of bowmanship from the sage Vasishta. One day, the sage Vishwamitra visited the kingdom and asked King Dasaratha to send Rama to protect him from demons who had been disturbing his sacrifices. Although very reluctant, Dasharatha agreed to send Rama and Lakshmana with Vishwamitra. As the brothers fulfilled their duties, Vishwamitra was pleased with them and bestowed upon them various celestial weapons.

Towards the end of their stay with Vishwamitra, Rama chanced to pass near the kingdom of Mithila and heard that its king, Janaka, had offered his peerless daughter, Sita, in marriage to the man who could bend the mighty bow of god Siva, which had been kept at Janaka's court. Rama at once determined to accomplish the feat, which had been tried in vain by so many suitors. When he presented himself at court Janaka was at once won by his youth and beauty. Five thousand men drew in the mighty bow, resting upon an eight-wheeled chariot. Rama without any apparent effort bent it until it broke and, Janaka gladly gave him his eautiful daughter. After the splendid wedding ceremonies were over, the happy pair travelled back to Ayodhya.

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Rama's Exile: King Dasaratha, began to feel weary of reigning, and decidd to make Rama, his eldest son and heir-apparent, the co-regent (*Yuvaraja*). His happy people received the announcement of his intention with delight and the whole city was in the midst of the most splendid preparations for the ceremony. Dasaratha went to discuss the celebrations with his favourite wife Kaikeyi. However, Kaikeyi, her jealousy aroused by her evil maid Manthara, because the son of Kausalya and not her darling Bharata, at that time absent from the city, was to be made Yuvaraja, fled to an ante-chamber where Dasharata found her in tears..

To Dasharatha's concerned queries, Kaikeyi recalled that, ages ago, the old king had granted her two boons. She now demanded the fulfilment of these before she would consent to smile upon him. Dasharatha agreed and Kaikeyi revealed her demands. She required him, first, to appoint her son Bharata as co-regent and, second, to exile Rama for fourteen years to the terrible forest of Dandaka.

Dasharatha was grief-stricken, but agreed to abide by his promise. Rama, the obedient son, immediately agreed to relinquish his claim to the throne and started to leave for his exile. His faithful wife Sita and his loving brother Lakshmana also decided to go along with Rama. With Dasharatha lying grief-stricken, Rama left for the forest, followed by the lamenting people of Ayodhya. Soon after, king Dasharatha died, overcome by grief.

Sita's Abduction: Rama, Sita and Lakshmana left behind Ayodhya and its people, crossed the river Ganges and went into the forest. They found an idyllic place called Chitrakuta to establish their hermitage. No more beautiful place could be imagined. Flowers of every kind, delicious fruits, and on every side the most pleasing prospects, together with perfect love, made their hermitage a paradise on earth. In the forest, Rama befriended the old vulture-king, Jatayu.

Meanwhile, Bharata returned to Ayodhya and, being also devoted to Rama, became furious with Kaikeyi for her role in exiling Rama and for the death of his father. Determined to bring back Rama, he headed for the forest. When he found Rama and pleaded with him to return and assume the throne, Rama politely refused, saying that he was duty-bound to see that his father's promise was fulfilled. Reluctantly Bharata agreed to return to the kingdom, requesting that Rama give to him his sandals. Back in Ayodhya, Baratha placed Rama's sandals on the throne of Ayodhya, and ruled as Rama's proxy from a village called Nandigrama near Ayodhya, awaiting his return. He also vowed to end his own life if Rama failed to return after fourteen years.

One day, the demoness Surpanakha, a sister of the demon king Ravana, chanced upon Rama's hermitage and saw the handsome Rama and became enamored. Taking the form of a beautiful young girl, she tried to seduce Rama. Rama, ever faithful to his wife Sita, did not respond. But Lakshmana, infuriated by Surpanaka's act of willful lasciviousness, severed her nose and ears. Surpanakha flew back to Ravana complaining. Ravana, after hearing of the beautiful Sita from Surpanakha, resolved to kill Rama in revenge and take

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Sita for himself. With the help of the demon Maricha Ravana lured Rama and Lakshmana away from the hermitage, leaving Sita alone. Before leaving Lakshmana drew a circle in the dirt saying that Sita would be safe as long as she stayed in the circle. Ravana approached the hermitage in the guise of an old man and asked Sita to give him some food. Initially hesitant to step out of Lakshmana's circle, Sita finally stepped out to give the old man some food. At this moment Ravana grabbed Sita and fled in his airborne vehicle, (Pushpaka Vimana). Jatayu, seeing them fly, attempted to save Sita, but Ravana engaged Jatayu in combat and choped off the vulture's wings. On returning to the hermitage, Rama and Lakshmana found it empty and anxiously began a search. Through Jatayu, whom they found lying mortally wounded, Rama and Lakshmana learnt of Sita's fate.

Monkey Kingdom: Continuing their search, they encountered the monkey king of Kishkindha, Sugriva, and Hanuman, one of his generals, among whom Sita had dropped from the chariot her scarf and some ornaments. Sugriva had been deposed from his kingdom by his brother, Vali, who had also taken his wife Roma from him. Rama agreed to defeat Vali if Sugriva would assist in the search for Sita. The agreement made, Sugriva challenged Vali to a duel. While the duel was progressing, Rama shot from his bow and killed Vali. Sugriva regained his kingdom and his wife.

Sugriva and Rama sent the monkey soldiers in various directions in search of Sita. However their efforts didn't bear fruit until they met another ancient vulture, Sampati, who was the brother of the slain Jatayu. Sampati was earthbound and deformed-his wings were burnt when he flew too close to the Sun. His brother, being hardier, had saved him from falling to his death. While Jatayu was the physically stronger of the two, Sampati possessed a compensating gift of vision. Sampati's vision was incredibly powerful, spanning several hundred yojanas and enabling him to see farther than anyone else. On hearing of Ravana's killing his brother, he readily agreed to help the monkeys. He was soon able to spot Sita in the southern direction. He could see her imprisoned in a garden of Ashoka trees on the island of Lanka, beyond the southern ocean.

Hanuman in Lanka: Sugriva dispatched his monkey army to the south with his nephew Angad at the head. Hanuman went with Angad as his general. Whey they reached deep south, they found a great ocean stretching between them and land of Lanka. They could find no means by which to cross the ocean. Commanding his soldiers to remain where they were, Hanuman expanded his body to enormous proportions, leaped the vast expanse of water, and alighted upon a mountain *Trikuta* from which he could look down upon Lanka. Perceiving the city to be closely guarded, he assumed the form of a cat, and thus, unsuspected, crept through the barriers and examined the city. He found Ravana in his apartments, surrounded by beautiful women, but Sita was not among them. Continuing his search, he at last discovered her, her beauty dimmed by grief, seated under a tree in a beautiful asoka grove, guarded by hideous rakshasas with the faces of buffaloes, dogs, and swine.

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Assuming the form of a tiny monkey, Hanuman crept down the tree, and giving her the ring of Rama, took one from her. He offered to carry her away with him, but Sita declared that Rama must himself come to her rescue, and as proof of finding her Sita gave Hanuman a priceless jewel to take back to Rama. While they were talking together, Ravana appeared, and, after fruitless wooing, announced that if Sita did not yield herself to him in two months he would have her guards "mince her limbs with steel" for his morning repast.

In his rage, Hanuman destroyed a mango grove and was captured by the rakshasa guards, and brought before Ravana. Hanuman proclaimed that he was a messenger of Rama, and demanded that Ravana restore Sita to Rama or fall victim to Rama's wrath. Furious at hearing Hanuman's words, Ravana ordered Hanuman's death.

Vibhishana, Ravana's righteous brother, intervened and counseled Ravana to follow the scriptures, reminding that it was improper to execute a messenger, and instead told him to exact the appropriate punishment for Hanuman's crime. Ravana accepted and ordered his rakshasas to set fire to Hanuman's tail. As soon as this was done, Hanuman made himself very small, slipped from his bonds, and, jumping upon the roofs, spread a conflagration through the city of Lanka. He leaped back to the mainland, conveyed the news of Sita's captivity to Rama and Sugriva, and was soon engaged in active preparations for the campaign.

Battle of Lanka: Rama decided that as long as the ocean was not bridged, it was impossible for any one but Hanuman to cross it. Rama meditated for three days, but in vain. In his anger at being so ignored, Ram turned his weapons against the ocean, until from the terrified waves arose Varuna, the god of the ocean, who promised him that if he built a bridge, the waves should support the materials as firmly as though it were built on land.

Terror reigned in Lanka at the news of the approach of Rama. Vibishana, Ravana's brother, deserted to Rama, because of the demon's rage when he advised him to make peace with Rama. Fiercely fought battles ensued, in which even the gods took part — Vishnu and Indra taking sides with Rama, and the evil spirits fighting with Ravana.

After the war had been fought for some time, with varying results, and a great number of troops on both sides were killed, it was decided to determine the victor by single combat between Ravana and Rama. Even the gods were terrified at the fierceness of the conflict. At each shot Rama's mighty bow cut off a head of Ravana, which at once grew back, and the hero was in despair until Vibhishana told him to aim at Ravana's belly-button. Rama took careful aim.

As Ravana fell by this weapon, flowers rained from heaven upon the happy victor, and his ears were ravished with celestial music. Touched by the grief of Ravana's widow, Mandodari, Rama ordered a splendid funeral for his foe, and then sought the conquered city.

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Sita was led forth, beaming with happiness at finding herself reunited to her husband; but her happiness was destined to be of short duration. Rama received her with coldness and with downcast eyes, saying that she could no longer be his wife, after having dwelt in the house of Ravana. Sita assured him of her innocence; but on his continuing to revile her, she ordred her funeral pyre to be built, since she would rather die by fire than live despised by Rama. The sympathy of all the bystanders was with Sita, but Rama saw her enter the flames without a tremor. Soon Agni, the god of fire, appeared, bearing the uninjured Sita in his arms. Her innocence thus publicly proved by the trial by fire, she was welcomed by Rama, whose treatment she tenderly forgave.

The conquest won, Ravana defeated, and Sita restored, Rama returned in triumph to Ayodhya, and assumed the governance to the great delight of Bharata and the people of Ayondhya.

Sita Banished: Ayodhya was prosperous, the people were happy and for a time all went well. It was not long, however, before whispers concerning Sita's long stay in Lanka spread through the city, and Rama came to hear the whisperings that a famine in the country was due to the guilt of Sita, who had suffered the caresses of Ravana while in captivity. Under the pressure from the citizens of Ayodhya, Rama banished her to the forest in which they had spent together the happy years of their exile. Without a murmur the unhappy Sita dragged herself to the forest, and, torn with grief of body and spirit, found the hermitage of Valmiki, where she gave birth to twin sons, Lava and Kuca. Here she reared them, with the assistance of the hermit, who was their teacher, and under whose care they grew to manhood, handsome and strong.

It chanced that about the time the youths were twenty years old, Rama began to think the gods were angered with him because he had killed Ravana, who was the son of a Brahman. Rama became determined to propitiate them by means of Asvamedha, the great sacrifice, in which he caused a horse to be turned loose in the forest. When his men went to retake it, at the end of the year, they found it caught by two strong and beautiful youths who resisted all efforts to capture them. When his men couldn't retake the horse, Rama went to the forest in person, only to learn that the youths were his twin sons, Lava and Kuca. Struck with remorse, Rama recalled the sufferings of his wife Sita, and on learning that she was at the hermitage of Valmiki, requested her to come with him.

Sita had time to recover from the love of her youth, and the prospect of life with Rama, she felt, was not altogether pleasant. She appealed to the earth, if she had never loved any man but Rama, if her truth and purity were known to the earth, let it open its bosom and take her to it. While the people stood trembling with horror, the earth opened, a gorgeous throne appeared, and the goddess of earth, seated upon it, took Sita beside her and conveyed her to the realms of eternal happiness, leaving the too late repentant people to wear out the remaining years in penitence.

Morals in Ramayana: In his *Ramayana,* Valmiki expresses his view of human code of conduct through Rama: life is evanescent and the hedonistic approach to it is meaningless.

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However, that should not allow one to be indifferent to one's own rights and duties laid down in the ancient texts. He thus adopts the view that Dharma is what is proclaimed in the Veda and it should be followed for its own sake, not for what it brings you in pain or pleasure. Doing this will ensure one's welfare in this and the next world. In addition, Ramayana also reinforces the need for thinking about the consequences before making promises, for if you make them you must keep them, no matter how hard it may be.

Sankshepa Ramayana, the brief narration of the entire Ramayana story by the age Narada to Valmiki, forms the first *sarga* of Valmiki Ramayana. Narada lists the sixteen qualities of the ideal man and says that Rama was the complete man possessing all sixteen of these qualities. Although Rama himself declares "he is but a man, and never once claims to be divine, Rama is regarded by Hindus as one of the most important Avatar of the god Vishnu and as an ideal man.

Valmiki portrays Rama not as a supernatural being, but as a human with all the attendant shortcomings, who encounters moral dilemmas but who overcomes these by simply adhering to the *dharma*—the righteous way. There are several instances narrated in Valmiki Ramayana which cast shadows on the pristine character of the hero. When Rama killed Vali to aid Sugriva regain his throne, it was not in fair combat, but while hiding behind a tree. When Sita was freed from Ravana's prison, Rama forced Sita to undergo an ordeal by fire to prove her purity and later as the king, Rama killed the Shudra Shambuka for performing a yogic penance not in keeping with his perceived low station in the society. These any many more instances within *Ramayana* illustrate the very human nature of the hero Rama help to reinforce the basic moral behind the story that men do not have to be supernatural to be righteous.

Textual History: Traditionally the epic belongs to the Treta Yuga, one of the four eons of Hindu chronology and is attributed to Valmiki, is an active participant in the story.

It is composed in Epic Sanskrit, an early variant of Classical Sanskrit, so that in principle the core of the work may date to as early as the 5th century BC. Since in its current form, after hundreds of years of transmission through recitations and in manuscript form, the epic has gone thorough numerous variations, it cannot be dated by linguistic analysis as a whole, and should be considered to have emerged over a long process, spanning maybe from the 5th century BCE to the 4th century BC.

The core events told in the epic may well be of even greater age, the names of the characters, Rama, Sita, Dasharata, Janaka, Vasishta and Vishwamitra are all known in the Vedic literature such as the Brahmanas which are older than the Valmiki Ramayana. However, nowhere in the surviving Vedic poetry, is a story similar to the Ramayana of Valmiki. Brahma, one of the main characters of *Ramayana*, and Vishnu, who according to *Bala Kanda* was incarnated as Rama are not Vedic deities, and come first into prominence with the epics themselves (and further during the 'Puranic' period of the later 1st millennium BC).

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There is general consensus that books two to six form the oldest portion of the epic while the first book *Bala Kanda* and the last the *Uttara Kanda* are later additions. The author or authors of *Bala Kanda* and *Ayodhya Kanda* appear to be familiar with the eastern Gangetic basin region of northern India and the Kosala and Magadha region during the period of the sixteen janapadas as the geographical and geopolitical data is in keeping with what is known about the region. However when the story moves to the *Araya Kanda* and beyond, it seems to turn abruptly into fantasy with its demn-slaying hero and fantastic creatures.

The geography of central and south India is increasingly vaguely described. The knowledge of the location of the island of Sri Lanka also lacks detail. Basing his assumption on these features, the historian H.D. Sankalia has proposed a date of the 4th century BCE for the composition of the text.. A. L. Basham, however, is of the opinion that Rama may have been a minor chief who lived in the 8th or the 7th century BCE.

The events of the epic have also been dated to as early as 6000 BCE by adherents of archaeoastronomy.

Variant Versions: The epic story of Ramayana was adopted by several cultures across Asia. Shown here is a Thai historic artwork depicting the battle which took place between Rama and Ravana. As in many oral epics, multiple versions of the Ramayana survive. In particular, the Ramayana related in north India differs in important respects from that preserved in South India and the rest of South-East Asia. There is an extensive tradition of oral storytelling based on the Ramayana in Thailand, Cambodia, Malayasia, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia. In many Malay versions, Lakshmana is given greater importance than Rama, whose character is considered somewhat weak.

Within India: There are diverse regional versions of the Ramayana written by various authors in India. Some of them differ significantly from each other. During the twelfth century CE, Kamban wrote *Ramavatharam*, known popularly as Kambaramayanam in Tamil. Although based on Valmiki Ramayana , Kambaramayanam is a true classic and unique in that Kamban has modified and reinterpreted many anecdotes in Valmiki Ramayana to suit the Tamil Culture and his own ideas. Valmiki's Ramayana inspired the Sri Ramacharit Manas by Tulasidas in 1576 , an epic Hindi version with a slant more grounded in a different realm of Hindu literature, that of bhakti.

It is an acknowledged masterpiece of India. It is popularly known as *Tulsi-krita Ramayana*. Gujarati poet Premanand wrote a version of *Ramayana* in the 17th century. Other versions include, a Bengali version by Krittivas in the 14th century, in Oriya by Balarama Das in the 16th century, in Marathi by Sridhara in the 18th century, a Telugu version by Ranganatha in the 15th century, a Kannada Ramayana by the 16th century poet Narahari, Kotha Ramayana in Assamese by the 14th century poet Madhava Kandali and Adhyathma Ramayanam Kilippattu, a Malayalam version by Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan in the 17th century.

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There is a sub-plot to Ramayana, prevalent in some parts of India relates to the adventures of Ahi Ravana and Mahi Ravana, the evil brother of Ravana, which enhances the role of Hanuman in the story. Hanuman rescues Rama and Lakshmana after they are kidnapped by the Ahimahi Ravana at the behest of Ravana and held prisoner in a subterranean cave, ready to be sacrificed to the goddess Kali.

There have been reports of a version of the Ramayana story prevalent amongst the Mappilas of Kerala. This version, known as *Mappila Ramayana*, forms a part of the Mappillapattu. *Mappillapattu* is a genre of folk singing popular amonst the musims of Kerala and Lakshadweep. Being of Muslim origin, the hero of this story is a sultan. There are no major changes in the names of characters except for that of Rama's which is changed to 'Laman'. The language and the imagery projected in the Mappilapattu are in accordance with the social fabric of the earlier Muslim community.

South-east Asian Versions: Many other Asian cultures have adapted the Ramayana, resulting in other national epics. Aspects of the Chinese epic Journey to the West was inspired by the Ramayana, particularly the character Sun Wukong, who is believed to have been based on Hanuman. Kakawin Rmayana is an old Javanese rendering of the Sanskrit Ramayana from the ninth century Indonesia. It is a faithful rendering of the Hindu epic with very little variation. Phra Lak Phra Lam is a Lao language version, whose title comes from Lakshmana and Rama. The story of Lakshmana and Rama is told as the previous life of the Buddha. In Hikayat Seri Rama of Malaysia, Dasharatha is the great-grandson of the Prophet Adam. Ravana receives boons from Allah instead of Brahma.

Thailand's popular national epic Ramakien is derived from the Hindu epic. In *Ramkien*, Sita is the daughter of Ravana and Mandodari the astrologer brother of Ravana, predicts calamity from the horoscope of Sita. So Ravana has her thrown into the waters, who, later, is picked by Janaka (*Janok*). While the main story is identical to that of the *Ramayana*, many other aspects were transposed into a Thai context, such as the clothes, weapons, topography, and elements of nature, which are described as being Thai in style. It has an expanded role for Hanuman and he is portrayed as a lascivious character. Ramakien can be seen in an elaborate illustration at the Wat Phra Kaew temple in Bangkok.

Other Southeast Asian adaptations include Ramakavaca of Bali, Maradia Lawana of the Philippines, the Reamker of Cambodia and the Yama Zatdaw of Myanmar.

Contemporary Versions: Contemporary versions of the Ramayana include *Shri Ramayana Darshanam* by Dr. K. V. Puttappa (Kuvempu) in Kannada and *Ramayana Kalpavrikshamu* by Viswanatha Satyanarayana in Telugu, both of which have been awarded the Jnanpith Award. The modern Indian author Ashok Banker has so far written a series of six English language novels based on the Ramayana.

The Gaiety Railway Theatre Company of Kanchipuram has presented revisionist views of this epic, seeking to restore the pride of the Dravidian people. These versions of the Ramayana diverge sharply from traditional presentations, with Ravana portrayed

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as a statesman scholar with whom Sita was infatuated, and Rama as a playboy prince with little application or dedication, who ordered massive genocide on a drunken whim. Such characterisations are part of a latent and increasing attempt by Dravidian movement to reassert their culture and independence.

Ramayana Landmarks: Amongst the ruins of the Vijayanagara empire near Hampi, is a cave known as Sugriva's Cave. The cave is marked by coloured markings. The place holds its similarity to the descriptions of 'kishkinda' in Sundarakanda. Rama is said to have met Hanuman here. The place is also home to the famous Hazararama temple (Temple of a thousand Ramas).

Puranas

Purana is the name of a genre (or a group of related genres) of Indian written literature (as distinct from oral literature). Its general themes are history, tradition and religion. It is usually written in the form of stories related by one person to another.

There are many texts designated as 'Purana.' The most important are:

- *Mahpurnas* and *Upapurnas*-Written in Sanskrit, by Brahmins. They usually adhere to the 'Panca-laksana' typology (see below). They tell of the creation of the universe and the human race, narrate the genealogies of kings and saints, and contain assorted narratives, stories, and philosophical and religious topics.

Included among the texts of distinctly lesser importance that also bear the name Puranas are

- *Sthala Purnas*-Scriptures usually extolling the virtues of a certain Hindu temple. They narrate stories of the temple's creation and spiritual history.
- *Kula Purnas*-Scriptures that deal with the origin and legends of a particular caste.

The designation 'Purana' implicitly confers on a text a kind of factual aura, somewhat similar to the designation 'History' in Western discourse.

Mahapuranas and Upapuranas: Mah- (Sanskrit 'great', 'mighty') and Upa- (Sanskrit 'lower', 'additional') Puranas are written in Sanskrit by Brahmins. Traditionally they are said to narrate five subjects, called Panca-laksana (Sanskrit 'five distinguishing marks'), which are:

1. Sarga-The creation of the universe.
2. Pratisarga-Secondary creations, mostly recreations after dissolution.
3. Vama-Genealogy of gods and sages.
4. Manvantara-The creation of the human race and the first human beings.
5. Vamanucaritam-Dynastic histories.

Most Mahapuranas and Upapuranas deal with these subject matters, although the bulk of their text consists of historical and religious narratives. Some scholars have suggested that these 'distinguishing marks' are shared by other traditional religious

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scriptures of the world (*e.g.* the Bible) . A Purana usually gives prominence to a certain deity — (Shiva, Vishnu or Krishna, Durga) — and depicts the other gods as subservient. Most use an abundance of religious and philosophical concepts in their narration, from Bhakti to Samkhya.

Classification: Traditionally it is said that there are eighteen Mahapuranas and eighteen Upapuranas. Of the Mahapuranas it is said that six belong to the quality (*guna*) of goodness, six to passion, and six to ignorance.

According to the *Padma Purana,* these are the Mahapuranas and their corresponding qualities:

- Goodness: Vishnu Purana, Bhagavata Purana, Naradeya Purana, Garuda Purana, Padma Purana, Varaha Purana
- Passion: Brahmanda Purana, Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Markandeya Purana, Bhavishya Purana, Vamana Purana, Brahma Purana
- Ignorance: Matsya Purana, Kurma purana, Linga Purana, Shiva Purana, Skanda Purana, Agni Purana

Some Upapuranas are: Sanat-kumara, Narasimha, Brihan-naradiya, Siva-rahasya, Durvasa, Kapila, Vamana, Bhargava, Varuna, Kalika, Samba, Nandi, Surya, Parasara, Vasishtha, Devi-Bhagavata, Ganesa, and Hamsa. Most of these have not been critically edited yet, and are available mostly through devotional publications, in multiple versions and recensions. Apart from the system of classification above mentioned, the Puranas are enumerated and classified in multiple ways. The canonical lists of Puranas vary from place to place and from time to time.

Author and Disemmination: Traditionally the Puranas are said to have been composed by the sage Vyasa, the narrator of the Mahabharata epic. Vyasa in Sanskrit means 'Divider,' and some scholars therefore take this simply as a term designating 'Editor'. The texts, these scholars say, were probably written all over India and are being rewritten and reedited to the present day.

The Puranas, being in Sanskrit, are usually not directly accessible to the common man as read texts. They are, however, available in vernacular translations and are disseminated by Brahmin scholars, who read from them and tell their stories, usually in Katha sessions (in which a travelling brahmin settles for a few weeks in a temple and narrates parts of a Purana, usually with a Bhakti perspective).

Chronology: The Itihasa-Purana is mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad. There are also references to the Puranas in the Atharvaveda 11.7.24 and the Satapatha Brahmana 11.5.6.8. and 13.4.3.13. There are probably also references to the Itihasa in the Nirukta. The Itihasa-Purana was considered to be almost as sacred and ancient as the Vedas. However, the ancient Itihasa-Purana was probably different from the later Puranas. Scholars argue that some contents of the Puranas may date to an earlier period.

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Notable Puranas: *The Bhagavata Purana*-It is concerned with Vishnu Bhakti, telling of the exploits and deeds of Vishnu's Avataras. Its tenth canto (its longest) narrates the deeds of Krishna and, probably for the first time in Sanskrit, tells of his exploits as a child, a theme later elaborated by many Bhakti movements.

- *The Devi-bhagavata Purana*-an Upapurana extolling the virtues of the goddess Durga as the supreme being. It has become (along with the Devi Mahatmya of the Mrkandeya Purana) a basic text for Devi worshipers.
- *The Skanda Purana*-probably the longest of all. A vast storehouse of parables, legends and stories, with multiple versions and recensions. Many untraced quotes from a Purana are conveniently attributed to this Purana.
- *The Bhavishya Purana*-Apart from its other content, it is said to contain references to the Judeo-Christian creation myth (Adam and Eve are referred to as Adama and Havyavati), the Judeo-Christian flood myth, Moses, Jesus (referred to as a-'God'), Mohammad (referred to as Mahmada-'the great intoxicator'), Queen Victoria (as Queen Vicyavati), etc. It also contains references to a certain Demon language (apparently English) containing words such as 'February'.

Sthala Puranas: This corpus of texts narrates the virtues and stories connected with a certain temple or shrine (the word 'Sthala' means 'Place' in Sanskrit). There are numerous Sthala Puranas, most written in vernaculars, some with Sanskrit versions as well. Most claim to have a Sanskrit origin, and some of the Sanskrit versions also appear in a Mahapurana or an Upapurana. Some Tamil Sthala Puranas have been researched by David Dean Shulman.

Kula Puranas: These are mostly Caste Puranas (the word 'Kula' means 'Family' or 'Tribe' in Sanskrit). They deal with a caste's origin myth, stories and legends. The caste purana is an important source for caste identity and is usually contested by other, rival, castes. This subgenre is usually in the vernacular and might at times be oral. This subgenre has been little researched. But it is rather well documented in the Caste section of the British Census of India Report and the various Gazzeteers.

Other Puranas: There are many other narratives that go by the name of Purana. Most are written in vernaculars and usually are concerned with mythical and historical narrations. These texts, such as the Padma Purana of Bengal and Assam (narrating the story of the goddess Manas), are vast in number and scattered all over the Indian subcontinent.

Non Hindu Puranas: There are many Jain Puranas, dealing with Jain myths, history and legends. Studies and translations of this particular genre are meagre. Arguably, some Buddhist Mahyna Sktras seem to have some characteristics of Puranas

Tantras: The Tantra refer to numerous and varied scriptures pertaining to any of several esoteric traditions rooted in Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. Most tantra were written between the 10th and 14th centuries BC. Tantra include a variety of mystical,

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occult, medical and scientific works. While Hinduism is typically viewed as being Vedic, the Tantra are not considered part of the orthodox Hindu/Vedic scriptures. Legend ascribes the origin of Tantra to Dattatreya, a semi-mythological yogi and the assumed author of the Jivanmukta Gita ("Song of the liberated soul"). Others traditionally confer authorship on the Indian god Shiva. Matsyendranath is credited with authorship of the Kaulajnana-nirnaya, a voluminous ninth-century tantra dealing with a host of mystical and magical subjects, and occupies an important position in the Hindu tantric lineage, as well as in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism.

Buddhist and Hindu Tantra, though having many similarities from the outside, do have some clear distinctions. Scholars are unable to determine whether the Hindu or the Buddhist version of Tantra appeared first in history. Buddhist Tantra is always part of the Mahayana school of Buddhism. Buddhist Tantra spread out from (North) India, chiefly to Tibet, where it became known as the Vajrayana school of Buddhism. It also had some influence on Chinese and Japanese Buddhism (notably Shingon).

Sutras: Sktra (Sanskrit) or Sutta (Pli) literally means a rope or thread that holds things together, and more metaphorically refers to an aphorism (or line, rule, formula), or a collection of such aphorisms in the form of a manual. It is derived from the verbal root siv, meaning to sew (these words, including English to sew and Latinate suture, all derive from PIE). In Hinduism the 'sutras' form a school of Vedic study, related to and somewhat later than the Upanishads. They served and continue to act as grand treatises on various schools of Hindu Philosophy. They elaborate in succinct verse, sometimes esoteric, Hindu views of metaphysics, cosmogony, the human condition, moksha (liberation), and how to maintain a blissful, dharmic life, in a cosmic spin of karma, reincarnation and desire.

In Buddhism, the term "sutra" refers generally to canonical scriptures that are regarded as records of the oral teachings of Gautama Buddha. In Chinese, these are known as *ching*. These teachings are assembled in the second part of the Tripitaka which is called Sutra Pitaka. There are also some Buddhist texts, such as the Platform Sutra, that are called sutras despite being attributed to much later authors. The Pali form of the word, sutta is used exclusively to refer to Buddhist scriptures, particularly those of the Pali Canon.

Below is a list of sutras, organized alphabetically under the broad categories of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Sutras primarily associated with Hinduism

Vedanga

- Shiksha (phonetics)
- Chandas (metrics)
- Vyakarana (grammar)
- Ashtadhyayi (Panini), discussing grammar

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- Nirukta (etymology)
- Jyotisha (astronomy)
- Kalpa (ritual)
- Srauta Sutras, performance of sacrifices
- Smarta Sutras
- Grhya Sutras, covering domestic life
- Samayacarika or Dharma Sutras
- Sulba Sutras, architecture of sacrificial area

Vedanta

- Brahma Sutras (or Vedanta Sutra) (Badarayana)

Hindu philosophy

- Yoga Sutras; (Patanjali)
- Nyaya Sutras, on logic
- Vaisesika Sutra

Sutras primarily associated with Buddhism

Pali Sutras

Tripitaka

- Digha Nikaya: 34 sutras, including
- Brahmajala Sutta, a critique of 64 'wrong views' current at the time of the Buddha
- Mahaparinibbana Sutta, the last days of the Buddha, Theravada version
- Majjhima Nikaya: 152 sutras, including
- Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta, on questions that lead to a thicket of views and on the extinguished fire as a metaphor for nirvana
- Anapanasati Sutta, a discourse on the method of being mindful of the breath
- Satipatthana Sutta
- Samyutta Nikaya: 2,889 sutras, including
- Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Buddha's first discourse on the nature of his enlightenment
- Upanisa Sutta, on the two types of conditionality
- Anguttara Nikaya: 2,308 sutras, including
- Kalama Sutta, the Buddha's advice to the Kalamas on how to decide which practices are correct
- Metta Sutta, a rhapsody on the quality of universal loving-kindness
- Khuddaka Nikaya: 266 sutras and miscellaneous texts, including

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- Dhammapada, a collection of sayings and aphorisms thought to be amongst the oldest texts

Mahayana Sutras

- Amitabha Sutra, or *Smaller Pure Land Sutra*
- Avatamsaka Sutra or *Flower Garland Sutra* (Chinese: *Huayan Jing*)
- Contemplation Sutra, important in Pure Land Buddhism
- Diamond Sutra
- Heart Sutra, important in Zen Buddhism
- Infinite Life Sutra, or *Large Pure Land Sutra*
- Lankavatara Sutra
- Lotus Sutra, foundational text of Tiantai and Nichiren sects
- Mahaparinirvana Sutra, the last days of the Buddha, Mahayana version
- Perfection of Wisdom or *Prajnparamita Sutras*
- Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch
- Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment (Chinese: *Yuanjue Jing*)
- Shurangama Sutra
- Sutra in Forty-Two Sections
- Sutra of Golden Light, important in Japanese Buddhism
- Ten Stages Sutra
- The Blessing of the Original Vow of the Master of Healing, Azure Radiance Tathagata
- Ullambana Sutra
- Vimalakirti-nirdesa Sutra

Vajrayana Sutras

- Mahavairocana Sutra also known as the Mahavairocandhisambodhi Tantra.
- Vajrasekhara Sutra

Other Sutras

- Kama Sutra, written by Vatsyayana, the sutra of kama (sensual gratification), explains sexual positions.
- Smokey the Bear Sutra, Written by American poet Gary Snyder (b. 1930) in 1969, which presents 20th century environmental concerns and convictions in the form of a Buddhist sutra. It is widely available on the internet due to the author's grant of free reproduction of the text. See Wikisource-Smokey the Bear Sutra.

Stotras

Stotras are Hindu prayers that praise aspects of God, such as Devi, Siva, or Vishnu. Stotras, according to Swami Tapasyananda, are invariably uttered aloud and consist of

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chanting verses conveying the glory and attributes of God. The three most famous and sacred stotras in Hinduism are Lalitha Sahasranama, Shri Rudram Chamakam, and Vishnu Sahasranama. Other famous Stotras are: Sri Ramraksha Stotra, Sri Maruti Stotra.

Nyaya

Nyaya is the name given to one of the six orthodox or *astika* schools of Hindu philosophy — specifically the school of logic. The Nyaya school of philosophical speculation is based on texts known as the Nyaya Sutras, which were written by Aksapada Gautama from around the 6th century BC.

Overview: The most important contribution made by the Nyaya school to modern Hindu thought is its methodology. This methodology is based on a system of logic that, subsequently, has been adopted by the majority of the other Indian schools, orthodox or not. This is comparable to how Western science and philosophy can be said to be largely based on Aristotelian logic.

However, Nyaya differs from Aristotelian logic in that it is more than logic in its own right. Its followers believed that obtaining valid knowledge was the only way to obtain release from suffering. They therefore took great pains to identify valid sources of knowledge and to distinguish these from mere false opinions.

According to the Nyaya school, there are exactly four sources of knowledge (pramanas): perception, inference, comparison and testimony. Knowledge obtained through each of these can, of course, still be either valid or invalid. As a result, Nyaya scholars again went to great pains to identify, in each case, what it took to make knowledge valid, in the process creating a number of explanatory schemes. In this sense, Nyaya is probably the closest Indian equivalent to contemporary analytic philosophy.

Epistemology: The Naiyanikas (the Nyaya scholars) accepted four means of obtaining knowledge (*pramana*), *viz.*, Perception, Inference, Comparison and Word.

- *Perception*, called *Pratyakaha*, occupies the foremost position in the Nyaya epistemology. Perception is defined by sense-object contact and is unerring. Perception can be of two types:
- Ordinary (*Laukika* or *Sadharana*), of six types, *viz.*, visual-by eyes, olfactory-by nose, auditory-by ears, tactile-by skin, gustatory-by tongue and mental-by mind.
- Extra-ordinary (*Alaukika* or *Asadharana*), of three types, *viz.*, *Samanyalakshana* (perceiving generality from a particular object), *Jnanalakshana* (when one sense organ can also perceive qualities not attributable to it, as when seeing a chili, one knows that it would be bitter or hot), and *Yogaja* (when certain human beings, from the power of *Yoga*, can perceive past, present and future and have supernatural abilities, either complete or some). Also, there aretwo modes or steps in perception, *viz.*, *Nirvikalpa*, when one just perceives an object without being able to know its featues, and *Savikalpa*, when one is able to clearly know an object. All laukika

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and alaukika pratyakshas are savikalpa. There is yet another stage called *Pratyabhijn*, when one is able to rerecognise something on the basis of memory.

- Inference, called *Anumana*, is one of the most important contributions of Nyaya. It can be of two types-inference for oneself (*Svarthanumana*, where one does not need any formal procedure, and at the most the last three of their 5 steps), and inference for others (*Parathanumana*, which requires a systematic methodology of 5 steps). Inference can also be classified into 3 types: *Purvavat* (infering an unperceived effect from a perceived cause), *Sheshavat* (infering an unperceived cause from a perceived effect) and *Samanyatodrishta* (when inference is not based on causation but on uniformity of coexistence). A detailed anaysis of error is also given, explaining when anumana could be false.
- Comparison, which is the rough transplation of *Upamana*. It is the knowledge of the relationship between a word and the object denoted by the word. It is produced by the knowledge of resemblance or similarity, given some pre-description of the new object beforehand.
- Word, or *Shabda* are also accepted as a *pramana*. It can be of two types, *Vaidika* (Vedic), which are the words of the four sacred Vedas, and are described as the Word of God, having been composed by God, and *Laukika*, or words and writings of trustworthy human beings.

Theory of Inference: The methodology of inference involves a combination of induction and deduction by moving from particular to particular via generality. It has five steps, as in the example shown:

- There is fire on the hill (called *Pratijn*, required to be proved)
- Because there is smoke there (called *Hetu*, reason)
- Wherever there is fire, there is smoke (called *Udaharana*, *i.e.*, example)
- There is smoke on the hill (called *Upanaya*, reaffirmation)
- Therefore there is fire on the hill (called *Nigamana*, conclusion)

In Nyaya terminology for this example, the hill would be called as *paksha* (minor term), the fire is called as *sadhya* (major term), the smoke is called as *hetu*, and the relationship between the smoke and the fire is called as *vyapti* (middle term). Hetu further has five characteristics: (1) It must be present in the Paksha, (2) It must be present in all positive instances, (3) It must be absent in all negetive instances, (4) It must not incompatible with the minor term or Paksha and (5) All other contradictions by other means of knowledge should be absent. The fallacies in Anumana (*hetvbhasa*) may occur due to the following:

- *Asiddha*: It is the unproved hetu that results in this fallacy. [Paksadharmata]
- *shrayasiddha*: If Paksha [minor term] itself is unreal, then there cannot be locus of the hetu. *e.g.* The sky-lotus is fragrant, because it is a lotus like any other lotus.

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- *Svarupasiddha*: Hetu cannot exist in paksa at all. *E.g.* Sound is a quality, because it is visible.
- *Vyapyatvasiddha*: Conditional hetu. 'Wherever there is fire, there is smoke'. The presence of smoke is due to wet fuel.
- *Savyabhichara*: This is the fallacy of irregular hetu.
- *Sadharana*: The hetu is too wide. It is present in both sapaksa and vipaksa. 'The hill has fire because it is knowable'.
- *Asadharana*: The hetu is too narrow. It is only present in the Paksha, it is not present in the Sapaksa and in the Vipaksha. 'Sound is eternal becase it is udible'.
- *Anupasamhari*: Here the hetu is non-exclusive. The hetu is all-inclusive and leaves nothing by way of sapaksha or vipaksha. *e.g.* 'All things are non-ternal, because they are knowable'.
- *Satpratipaksa*: Here the hetu is contradicted by another hetu. If both have equal force, then nothing follows. 'Sound is eternal, because it is audible', and 'Sound is non-eternal, because it is produced'. Here 'audible' is counter-balanced by 'produced' and both are of equal force.
- *Badhita*: When another proof (as by perception) definitely contradicts and disproves the middle term (hetu). 'Fire is cold because it is a substance'.
- *Viruddha*: Instead of proving something it is proving the opposite. 'Sound is eternal because it is produced'.

The Nyaya Theory of Causation: A *cause* is defined as an unconditional and invariable antecedent of an *effect* and an effect as an unconditional and invariable consequent of a cause. The same cause produces the same effect; and the same effect is produced by the same cause. The cause is *not* present in any hidden form whatsoever in its effect.

The following conditions should be met:

[1] The cause must be antencedent [Purvavrtti]

[2] Invariability [Niyatapurvavrtti]

[3] Unconditionality [Ananyathasidha]

Nyaya recognizes five kinds of accidental antecedents [Anyathasiddha]

[a] Mere accidental antecedent. *E.g.*, The colour of the potter's cloth.

[b] Remote cause is not a cause because it is not unconditional. *E.g.*, The father of the potter.

[c] The co-effects of a cause are not causally related.

[d] Eternal substances, or eternal conditions are not unconditional antecedents. *e.g.* space.

[e] Unnecessary things, *e.g.* the donkey of the potter.

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Nyaya recognizes three kinds of cause:

[1] Samavayi- material cause. *E.g.* Thread of a cloth.

[2] Asamavayi- Colour of the thread which gives the colour of the cloth.

[3] Nimitta- Efficient cause, *e.g.* the weaver of the cloth.

Anyathakyativada of Nyaya: The Nyaya theory of error is similar to that of Kumarila's Viparita-khyati (see Mimamsa). The Nyayayikas also believe like Kumarila that error is due to a wrong synthesis of the presented and the represented objects. The represented object is confused with the presented one. The word 'anyatha' means 'elsewise' and 'elsewhere' and both these meanings are brought out in error. The presented object is perceived elsewise and the represented object exists elsewhere. They further maintain that knowledge is not intrinsically valid but becomes so on account of extraneous conditions (*paratah pramana* during both validity and invalidity).

Nyaya Argument for the Existence of God: Early Naiyanikas wrote very little about God, *i.e.*, Ishvara (literally, the Supreme Lord). However, later Buddhists in India had become from agnostic to strictly atheistic. As a reaction, the later Naiyanikas entered into disputes with the Buddhists and tried to prove the existence of God through logic. They made this question a challenge to their own existence. They gave the following nine proofs for the existence of God, enlisted in Udayana's *Nyaya Kusumanjali*:

- *Kryt* (lit. "from effect"): An effect is produced by a cause, and similarly, the universe must also have a cause. Causes (according to Naiyanikas) are of three kinds- Samavayi (in case of the universe, the atoms), Asamavayi (the assosiation of atoms) and Nimitta (which is Ishvara). The active cause of the world must have an absolute knowledge of all the material of creation, and hence it must be God. Hence from the creation, the existence of the Creator is proved.
- *yojant* (lit., from combination): Atoms are inactive and properties are unphysical. So it must be God who creates the world with his will by causing the atoms to join. Self-combination of inanimate and lifeless things is not possible, otherwise atoms would only combine at random, creating chaos. There is to be seen the hand of a wise organiser behind the systematic grouping of the ultimate atoms into dyads and molecules. That final organiser is God.
- *Dhwite* (lit., from support): Just as a material thing falls off without a support, similarly, God is the supporter and bearer of this world, without which the world would not have remained integrated. This universe is hence superintended within God, which proves his existence.
- *Padt* (lit., from word): Every word has the capability to represent a certain object. It is the will of God that a thing should be represented by a certain word. Similarly, no knowledge can come to us of the different things here, unless there is a source of this knowledge. The origin of all knowledge should be omniscient, and,

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consequently, omnipotent. Such a being is not to be seen in this universe, and so it must be outside it. This being is God.

- *Pratyatah* (lit, from faith): the Hindu holy scriptures, the Vedas, are regarded as the source of eternal knowledge. Their knowledge is free from fallacies and are widely believed as a source of proof. Their authors cannot be human beings because human knowledge is limited. They cannot obtain knowledge of past, present and future and indepth knowledge of mind. Hence only God can be the creator of the Vedas. Hence his existence is proved from his being the author of the Vedas, which he revealed to various sages over a period of time.
- *Shruteh* (lit., from scriptures): The Shrutis, *i.e.*., the Vedas extol God and talk about his existence. "He is the lord of all subjects, omniscient and knower of one's internal feelings; He is the creator, cause and destroyer of the world", say the Shrutis. The Shrutis are regarded as a source of proofs by Naiyanikas. Hence the existence of God is proved.
- *Vkyt* (lit., from precepts): Again, the Veda must have been produced by a person because it has the nature of "sentences,", in other words, the sentences of the Veda were produced by a person because they have the nature of sentences, just as the sentences of beings like ourselves. That person must have been God.
- *Samkhyvi hesht* (lit., from the speciality of numbers): The size of a dyad or a molecule depends on the number of the atoms that go to constitute it. This requisite number of the atoms that go to form a particular compound could not have been originally the object of the perception of any human being; so its contemplator must be God.
- *Adwihct* (lit., from the unforseen): It is seen that some people in this world are happy, some are in misery. Some are rich and some poor. The Naiyanikas explain this by the concept of Karma and reincarnation. The fruit of an individual's actions does not always lie within the reach of the individual who is the agent. There ought to be, therefore, a dispenser of the fruits of actions, and this supreme dispenser is God.

Nyaya Arguments for Monotheism: Not only have the Naiyanikas given proofs for the existence of God, but they have also given an argument that such a God can only be one. In the *Nyaya Kusumanjali*, this is discussed against the proposition of the Mimamsa school—that let us assume there were many demigods (Devas) and sages (rishis) in the beginning, who wrote the Vedas and created the world. Nyaya says that:

[if they assume such] omniscient beings, those endowed with the various superhuman faculties of assuming infinitesimal size, etc., and capable of creating everything, then we reply that the *law of parsimony* bids us assume only one such, namely Him, the adorable Lord. There can be no confidence in a non-eternal and non omniscient being, and hence it follows that according to the system which rejects God, the tradition of the Veda is simultaneously overthrown; there is no other way open.

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In other words, Nyaya says that the polytheist would have to give elaborate proofs for the existence and origin of his several celestial spirits, none of which would be logical. So it is much more logical to assume only One, eternal and omniscient God.

Vaisheshika: Vaisheshika, also Vaisesika, is one of the six Hindu schools of philosophy (orthodox Vedic systems) of India. Historically, it has been closely associated with the Hindu school of logic, Nyaya. Vaisesika espouses a form of atomism and postulates that all objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of atom. Originally proposed by the sage Kanda (or *Kana-bhuk*, literally, *atom-eater*) from around the 6th century BC.

Overview: Although the Vaishesika system developed independently from the Nyaya, the two eventually merged because of their closely related metaphysical theories. In its classical form, however, the Vaishesika school differed from the Nyaya in one crucial respect: where Nyaya accepted four sources of valid knowledge, the Vaishesika accepted only perception and inference. Vaishesika atomism also differs from the atomic theory of modern science: according to the Vaishesikas, the functioning of atoms was guided or directed by the will of the Supreme Being. This is therefore a theistic form of atomism.

An alternative view would qualify the above in that the holism evident in the ancient texts mandate the identification of six separate traditional environments of philosophy, consisting of three sets of two pairs.

The Logic of Vaisheshika: Being associated with the school of logic, early Vaisesika texts use logical argument to prove that the world is made of indivisible atoms: Assume that the world is not made of indivisible atoms, and that matter is continuous. Take a stone. One can divide this up into infinitely many pieces (since matter is continuous). Now, the Himalayan mountain range also has infinitely many pieces, so one may build another Himalayan mountain range with the infinite number of pieces that one has. One begins with a stone and ends up with the Himalayas, which is obviously ridiculous-so the original assumption that matter is continuous must be wrong, and so all objects must be made up of a finite number of pieces, called *atoms*. Later Vaisesika philosophers tried to develop a theory to explain the properties of materials as the interaction of different types of atoms that make up the material. However, Vaisesika philosophy states that these interactions are driven by divine will, making this school of philosophy a theistic one. Epistemologically, the Vaisesika school accepts perception (*pratyaksha*) and inference (*anumna*) as valid sources of knowledge.

Later Vaisesika commentators include *Prasastapada* and *Sridhara*. Over the centuries, the school merged with the Nyaya system of Indian philosophy to form the combined school of *Nyaya-Vaisesika*. The school suffered a natural decline in India after the 15th century.

Samkhya

Samkhya, also Sankhya, is one of the schools of Indian philosophy. It is one of the six astika (that which recognizes vedic authority) systems of Hindu philosophy. It is

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regarded as the oldest of the orthodox philosophical systems in Hinduism, predating Buddhism of circa 500 BCE. Its philosophy regards the universe as consisting of two eternal realities: Purusha and Prakrti; it is therefore a strongly dualist and enumerationist philosophy. The Purusha is the centre of consciousness, whereas the Prakriti is the source of all material existence.

The Sankhya school has deeply influenced the Hindu Yoga school of philosophy. They are sometimes referred together as Samkhya-yoga school. Sage Kapila is traditionally considered to be the founder of the Sankhya school, although no historical verification is possible. The definitive text of classical Sankhya is the extant *Sankhya Karika*, written by *Ishvara Krishna*, circa 200 CE.

Epistemology of Sankhya: According to the Sankhya school, knowledge is possible through three *pramanas* (means of knowledge)-

- *Pratyaksha*-direct sense perception
- *Anumana*-logical inference
- *Sabda*-verbal testimony

Metaphysics of Samkhya: Metaphysically, Samkhya maintains a radical duality between spirit/consciousness (*Purusha*) and matter (*Prakrti*). All physical events are considered to be manifestations of the evolution of *Prakrti*, or primal Nature (from which all physical bodies are derived). Each sentient being is a *Purusha*, and is limitless and unrestricted by its physical body. Samsaara or bondage arises when the *Purusha* does not have the discriminate knowledge and so is misled as to its own identity, confusing itself with the physical body-which is actually an evolute of *Prakriti*. The spirit is liberated when the discriminate knowledge of the difference between conscious Purusha and unconscious Prakriti is realized.

The most notable feature of Sankhya is its unique theory of Cosmic evolution (not connected with Darwin's evolution). Sankhya theorizes that Prakriti is the source of the world of becoming. It is pure potentiality that evolves itself successively into twenty four tattvas or principles. The evolution itself is possible because *Prakriti* is always in a state of tension among its constituent strands -

- *Sattva*-a template of balance or equilibrium;
- *Rajas*-a template of expansion or activity;
- *Tamas*-a template of inertia or resistance to action.

All macrocosmic and microcosmic creation uses these templates. The twenty four principles that evolves are -

- *Prakriti*-The most subtle potentiality that is behind whatever that is created in the physical universe.
- *Mahat*-first product of evolution from Prakriti, pure potentiality. *Mahat* is also considered to be the principle responsible for the rise of buddhi or intelligence in living beings.

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- *Ahamkara* or ego-sense-second product of evolution. It is responsible for the self-sense in living beings.
- *Manas* or instinctive mind-evolves from the *sattva* aspect of *ahamkara*.
- *Panch jnana indriya* or five sense organs-also evolves from the *sattva* aspect of *Ahamkara*.
- *Panch karma indriya* or five organs of action- The organs of action are hands, legs, vocal apparatus, urino-genital organ and anus. They too evolve from the *sattva* aspect of *Ahamkara*
- *Panch tanmatras* or five subtle elements-evolves from the *Tamas* aspect of *Ahamkara*. The subtle elements are the root energies of sound, touch, sight, taste and smell.
- *Panch mahabhuta* or five great substances - ether, air, fire, water and earth. This is the revealed aspect of the physical universe.

The evolution of primal Nature is also considered to be purposeful-Prakrti evolves *for* the spirit in bondage. The spirit who is always free is only a witness to the evolution, even though due to the absence of discriminate knowledge, he misidentifies himself with it. The evolution obeys causality relationships, with primal Nature itself being the material cause of all physical creation. The cause and effect theory of Sankhya is called Satkaarya-vaada (theory of existent causes), and holds that nothing can really be created from or destroyed into nothingness-all evolution is simply the transformation of primal Nature from one form to another.

The evolution of matter occurs when the relative strengths of the attributes changes. The evolution ceases when the spirit realises that it is distinct from primal Nature and thus cannot evolve. This destroys the purpose of evolution, thus stopping Prakrti from evolving for Purusha.

This was a dualistic philosophy. But there are differences between the Samkhya and Western forms of dualism. In the West, the fundamental distinction is between mind and body. In Samkhya, however, it is between the self (purusha) and matter, and the latter incorporates what Westerners would normally refer to as "mind". This means that the Self as the Samkhya understands it is more transcendent than "mind". It is sometimes defined as 'that which observes' and the mind is the instrument through which this observation occurs.

Samkhyan cosmology describes how life emerges in the universe; the relationship between Purusha and Prakriti is crucial to Patanjali's yoga system. The evolution of forms at the basis of Samkhya is quite unique. The strands of Sankhyan thought can be traced back to the Vedic speculation of creation. It is also frequently mentioned in the Mahabharata and Yogavasishta.

Sankhya also has a strong cognitive theory built into it; curiously, while consciousness/ spirit is considered to be radically different from any physical entities, the mind (*manas*),

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ego (*ahamkara*) and intellect (*buddhi*) are all considered to be manifestations of Prakrti (physical entity).

There is no philosophical place for a creator God in the Sankhya philosophy; indeed, the concept of God was incorporated into the Sankhya viewpoint only after it became associated with the theistic Yoga system of philosophy. Sankhya serves as the main opponent of Vedanta Philosophy which elucidates the monistic theory of creation. For the Vedanta school, Consciousness/Brahman is the cause of this world. Sankhya denies that vehemently as material world that is insentient cannot originate from a sentient element.

Yoga

Yoga is a family of ancient spiritual practices that originated in India, where it remains a vibrant living tradition and is seen as a means to enlightenment. Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Raja Yoga are considered the four main yogas, but there are many other types. In other parts of the world where yoga is popular, notably the West, Yoga has become associated with the asanas (postures) of Hatha Yoga, which are popular as fitness exercises and also form the basis of an expanding business.

Yoga as a means to enlightenment is central to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and has influenced other religious and spiritual practices throughout the world. Important Hindu texts establishing the basis for yoga include the Upanishads, Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Hatha Yoga Pradipika.

Yoga Practice and Intention: In Hinduism, Yoga is considered to be the ultimate way of attaining Enlightenment. The earliest written accounts of yoga appear in the Rig Veda, which began to be codified between 1500 and 1200 BCE. Some historians believe that this 5000-year-old sculpture is of a yogi.

Modern yoga practice often includes traditional elements inherited from eastern religion, such as moral and ethical principles, postures designed to keep the body fit, spiritual philosophy, instruction by a guru, chanting of mantras (sacred syllables), pranayama (breathing exercises), and stilling the mind through meditation. These elements are sometimes adapted to meet the needs of non-Hindu practitioners, who may be attracted to yoga by its utility as a relaxation technique or as a way to keep fit.

Proponents of yoga see daily practice as beneficial in itself, leading to improved health, emotional well-being, mental clarity, and joy in living. Yoga advocates progress toward the experience of samadhi, an advanced state of meditation where there is absorption in inner ecstasy.

The goals of yoga are expressed differently in different traditions. In theistic Hinduism, yoga may be seen as a set of practices intended to bring people closer to God - to help them achieve union with God. In Buddhism, which does not postulate a creator-type god, yoga may help people deepen their wisdom, compassion, and insight. In Western nations, where there is a strong emphasis on individualism, yoga practice may be an extension

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of the search for meaning in self, and integration of the different aspects of being. The terms Self-Realization and god-Realization are used interchangeably in Hindu yoga, with the underlying belief that the true nature of self, revealed through the practice of yoga, is of the same nature as God.

The ultimate goal of yoga is the attainment of liberation (Moksha) from worldly suffering and the cycle of birth and death (Samsara). Yoga entails mastery over the body, mind, and emotional self, and transcendence of desire. It is said to lead gradually to knowledge of the true nature of reality. The Yogi reaches an enlightened state where there is a cessation of thought and an experience of blissful union. This union may be of the individual soul (Atman) with the supreme Reality (Brahman), as in Vedanta philosophy; or with a specific god or goddess, as in theistic forms of Hinduism and some forms of Buddhism. Enlightenment may also be described as extinction of the limited ego, and direct and lasting perception of the non-dual nature of the universe.

For the average person still far from enlightenment, yoga can be a way of increasing one's spiritual awareness, or cultivating compassion and insight. While the history of yoga strongly connects it with Hinduism, proponents claim that yoga is not a religion itself, but contains practical steps which can benefit people of all religions, as well as those who do not consider themselves religious.

Origins: Images of a meditating yogi from the Indus Valley Civilization are thought to be 6 to 7 thousand years old. The earliest written accounts of yoga appear in the Rig Veda, which began to be codified between 1500 and 1200 BC. It is difficult to establish the date of yoga from this as the Rig Veda was orally transmitted for at least a millennium. The first Yoga text dates to around the 2nd century BC by Patanjali, and prescribes adherence to "eight limbs" (the sum of which constitute "Ashtanga Yoga") to quiet one's mind and merge with the infinite.

The first full description of the principles and goals of yoga are found in the Upanisads, thought to have been composed between the eighth and fourth centuries BC. The Upanisads are also called Vedanta since they constitute the end or conclusion of the Vedas (the traditional body of spiritual wisdom). In the Upanisads, the older practises of offering sacrifices and ceremonies to appease external gods gives way instead to a new understanding that man can, by means of an inner sacrifice, become one with the Supreme Being (referred to as Brhman or Mhtman) — through moral culture, restraint and training of the mind.

The word "yoga" derives from the Sanskrit root *yuj* ("to yoke"); which is cognate to modern English "yoke". Both derive from the Proto-Indo-European root yeug- meaning "to join" or "unite".

It is generally translated as "union of the individual atma (loosely translated to mean soul) with Paramatma, the universal soul." This may be understood as union with the Divine by integration of body, mind, and spirit. Thus, in essence, one who attempts yoga may loosely be referred to as a *yogi* or in Sanskrit, a yogin (masculine) or *yogini* (feminine).

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These designations are actually intended for advanced practitioners, who have already made considerable progress along the path, towards yoga.

Diversity of Yoga: Over the long history of yoga, different schools have emerged, and there are numerous examples of subdivisions and synthesis. It is common to speak of each form of yoga as a "path" to enlightenment. Thus, yoga may include love and devotion (as in Bhakti Yoga), selfless work (as in Karma Yoga), knowledge and discernment (as in Jnana Yoga), or an eight-limbed system of disciplines emphasizing meditation (as in Raja Yoga). These practices occupy a continuum from the religious to the scientific. They need not be mutually exclusive. (A person who follows te path of selfless work might also cultivate some knowledge and devotion.) Some people (particularly in Western cultures) pursue Hatha yoga as exercise divorced from spiritual practice.

Other types of yoga include Mantra Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Integral Yoga, Nitya Yoga, Maha Yoga, Purna Yoga, Anahata Yoga, Tantra Yoga, Tibetan Yoga, Sahaja Yoga etc. It is often helpful to check the teacher and lineage to be sure how these terms are being used. Another name for Raja Yoga ("royal yoga") is Ashtanga Yoga ("eight-limbed yoga"), but this should not be confused with the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga developed by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, which is a specific style of Hatha Yoga practice.

Yoga and Religion: In the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions, the spiritual goals of yoga are seen as inseparable from the religions of which yoga forms a part. Some yogis make a subtle distinction between religion and yoga, seeing religion as more concerned with culture, values, beliefs and rituals; and yoga as more concerned with Self-Realization, *i.e.*, direct perception of the ultimate truth. In this sense, religion and yoga are complementary. Sri Ramakrishna likened religion to the husk, and direct experience to the kernel. Both are needed, "but if one wants to get at the kernel itself, he must remove the husk of the grain."

Some forms of yoga come replete with a rich iconography, while others are more austere and minimalist. Hindu practitioners of yoga are proud of their religious traditions, while non-Hindu practitioners claim that yoga may be practiced sincerely by those who have not accepted the Hindu religion.

While the yoga tradition remains rooted in India, the fact that some modern yogis like Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda came to the West suggests that they saw hope the yoga tradition could also flourish there. Critics of yoga as practiced in the West charge that it is sometimes watered down, corrupted, or cut off from its spiritual roots (*e.g.* the popular view that yoga is primarily physical exercises). The sheer number of people practicing yoga outside India suggests the need to define yoga both by its historical roots and its modern adaptations.

Common Themes: Common to most forms of yoga is the practice of concentration (*dharana*) and meditation (*dhyana*). *Dharana*, according to Patanjali's definition, is the "binding of consciousness to a single point." The awareness is concentrated on a fine point

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of sensation (such as that of the breath entering and leaving the nostrils). Sustained single-pointed concentration gradually leads to meditation (*dhyana*), in which the inner faculties are able to expand and merge with something vast. Meditators sometimes report feelings of peace, joy, and oneness. The focus of meditation may differ from school to school, *e.g.* meditation on one of the chakras, such as the heart center (anahata) or the 'third eye' (ajna); or meditation on a particular deity, such as Krishna; or on a quality like peace. Non-dualist schools such as Advaita Vedanta may stress meditation on the Supreme with no form or qualities (Nirguna Brahman). This resembles Buddhist meditation on the Void.

Another common element is the spiritual teacher (guru in Sanskrit; lama in Tibetan). While emphasized to varying degrees by all schools of yoga, in some the guru is seen as an embodiment of the Divine. The guru guides the student (*shishya* or *chela*) through yogic discipline from the beginning. Thus, the novice yoga student traditionally devotes himself to a *satguru* (true teacher). Traditionally, knowledge of yoga-as well as permission to practice it or teach it has been passed down through initiatory chains of gurus and their students. This is called *guruparampara*. The yoga tradition is one of practical experience, but also incorporates texts which explain the techniques and philosophy of yoga. Many gurus write on the subject, either providing modern translations and elucidations of classical texts, or explaining how their particular teachings should be followed. A guru may also found an ashram or order of monks; these comprise the institutions of yoga. The yoga tradition has also been a fertile source of inspiration for poetry, music, dance, and art.

When students associate with a particular teacher, school, ashram or order, this naturally creates yoga communities where there are shared practices. Chanting of mantras such as Aum, singing of spiritual songs, and studying sacred texts are all common themes. The importance of any one element may differ from school to school, or student to student. Differences do not always reflect disagreement, but rather a multitude of approaches meant to serve students of differing needs, background and temperament. The yogi is sometimes portrayed as going beyond rules-based morality. This does not mean that a yogi will act in an immoral fashion, but rather that he or she will act with direct knowledge of the supreme Reality. In some legends, a yogi-having amassed merit through spiritual practice, may then cause mischief even to the gods. Some yogis in history have been naked ascetics, such as Swami Trailanga, who greatly vexed the occupying British in 19th century Benares by wandering about naked.

Roots of Yoga:

Bhagavad Gita

Schools

Samkhya • Nyaya

Vaisheshika • Yoga

Purva Mimamsa • Vedanta

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Schools of Vedanta

Advaita • Vishishtadvaita

Dvaita

Important figures

Kapila • Gotama

Kanada • Patanjali

Jaimini • Vyasa

Adi Shankara • Ramanuja

Madhva

The Bhagavad Gita famously distinguishes several types of "yoga", corresponding to the duties of different nature of people. Capturing the essence and at the same time going into detail about the various Yogas and their philosophies, it constantly refers to itself as such, the "Scripture of Yoga". The book is thought to have been written some time between the 5th and the 2nd century BC. In it, Krishna describes the following yogas:

(1) Karma yoga, the yoga of "action" in the world.

(2) Jnana yoga, the yoga of knowledge and intellectual endeavor.

(3) Bhakti yoga, the yoga of devotion to a deity.

(4) Raja yoga, the yoga of meditation

Patanjali: Perhaps the classic description of yoga is the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, which form the basis not only of the darshana called "yoga"—one of six such "orthodox" (*i.e.* Veda-accepting) schools of Hindu philosophy—but also of the practice of yoga in most ashrams (to the extent these can be distinguished). The school (*dharshana*) of Indian philosophy known as "yoga" is primarily Upanishadic with roots in Samkhya, and some scholars see some influence from Buddhism. The Yoga philosophy fully believes in the epistemology of the Samkhya school, as well as its concept of the individual spirits (Purusha) and the Nature (Prakriti)—but differs from Samkhya's atheism.

Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras presents the goal of yoga as 'the cessation of mental fluctuations' (cittavrtti nirodha), an achievement which gives rise to the possibility of stable meditation and thus deeper states of absorption (dhyana or samadhi). This requires considerable restraint (*yama*) and self-discipline (*niyama*; see below for Patanjali's eight limbs of yoga)). Patanjali's yoga is sometimes called Raja Yoga (Skt: "Royal yoga") or "Ashtanga Yoga" ("Eight-Limbed Yoga"), in order to distinguish it from Hatha yoga. It is held as authoritative by all schools. Patanjali is also known for writing commentaries (Mahabhashya) on the Sutras of the great Sanskrit grammarian Panini. In fact, Panini, Patanjali and Ktyyana are regarded are the highest authority not only in Sanskrit but also in the whole of Linguistics.

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Patanjali's text sets forth eight "limbs" of yoga practice. Interestingly, only one of them involves physical postures (and these mainly involve seated positions). The eight are:

(1) Yama (The five "abstentions"): violence, lying, theft, (illicit-) sex, and possessions

(2) Niyama (The five "observances"): purity, contentment, austerities, study, and surrender to god

(3) Asana: This term literally means "seat," and originally referred mainly to seated positions. With the rise of Hatha yoga, it came to be used of these yoga "postures" as well.

(4) Pranayama: Control of *prna* or vital breath

(5) *Pratyahara* ("Abstraction"): Reversal of the sense organs ("That by which the senses do not come into contact with their objects and, as it were, follow the nature of the mind." — Vyasa)

(6) Dharana ("Concentration"): Fixing the attention on a single object

(7) Dhyana ("Meditation")

(8) Samadhi: Super-conscious state or trance (state of liberation)

God in Yoga Philosophy: The philosophy of Yoga also presented certain arguments for the existence of God (Ishvara, lit., the Supreme Lord):

- The Vedas are regarded as evidence. The Vedas and their commentaries, the Upanishads mention and describe god—hence god exists.
- Continuity: people and things have various degrees of differences among themselves. Some people are foolish, some are wise. Hence there ought to be some Being who has the highest level of knowledge among all—who is omniscient. That being is god.
- Cosmic Evolution, leading to this universe, occurs because of the contact between Purusha (spirit) and Prakriti (Nature). Purusha is static, and Prakriti is unconscious. Hence there can be no contact between these two things of opposite characteristics, unless god—the omniscient being—brings about this contact.
- Meditation upon a deity is regarded as the best means of attaining liberation. If meditation on such a being helps in liberation, and all obstacles are removed, then the object of the meditation must have a real existence.

Ishvara is regarded as a special Purusha, who is beyond sorrow and Karma laws. He is one, perfect, infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent and eternal. He is beyond the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. He is different from an ordinary liberated spirit, because the latter were bound once, whereas Ishvara was never bound. He is kind and merciful. He is the father of the demigods (the various Devas) and of the sages (rishis), as well as their guru; He is the author of the Vedas. Yoga system is perhaps the first philosophy in the world to give arguments for monotheism. Yoga says that Ishvara can be only one and unique. If many gods are assumed:

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- Let us assume there are two gods. If god gives a certain quality (say white color) to a thing and god gives another (say black color) to the same thing, this would be mutually contradictory. On the other hand, if god choice reigns supreme, god would fail to remain as god.
- Let us assume the gods work in as a committee to do certain tasks one by one. Then while one god is doing his work, the existence of the other gods would be superfluous and unnecessary.

Hatha Yoga: Over the last century the term yoga has come to be especially associated with the postures (Sanskrit sanas) of hatha yoga ("Forced Yoga"). Hatha yoga has gained wide popularity outside of India and traditional yoga-practicing religions, and the postures are sometimes presented as entirely secular or non-spiritual in nature.

Traditional Hatha Yoga is a complete yogic path, including moral disciplines, physical exercises (*e.g.*, postures and breath control), and meditation-and encompasses far more than the yoga of postures and exercises practiced in the West as a physical culture. The seminal work on Hatha Yoga is the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, written by Swami Svatmarama.

Hatha Yoga was invented to provide a form of physical purification and training that would prepare aspirants for the higher training that is called Raja Yoga (see above). This is still true today. Despite this, many in the West practice 'Hatha yoga' solely for the perceived health benefits it provides, and not as a path to enlightenment.

Natya Yoga: The guide to Natya (Dance) Yoga was written by Bharata Muni. Sage Narada along with Gandharvas were the first to practise Natya Yoga, which comprise all the four main yoga's. Natya Yoga was practised by the medieval devadasis, and is currently taught in a few orthodox schools of Bharatanatyam and Odissi.

Yoga and Buddhism: Within the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism yoga likewise holds a central place, though not in the form presented by Patanjali or the Gita. (For example, physical postures are rarely practiced.) An example would be "guru yoga," the union with the mind of the spiritual teacher which must be done at the beginning of the spiritual path and regularly throughout. In the tantric traditions a number of practices are classified with the name "yoga", for example, the two of the four general classification of tantras -"Yoga Tantra" and "Highest Yoga Tantra".

A system of 108 bodily postures practiced with breath and heart rhythm timing in movement exercises is known as Trul khor or union of moon and sun (channel) prajna energies. The body postures of Tibetan ancient yogis are depicted on the walls of the Dalai Lama's summer temple of Lukhang. As the whole buddhist lineage transmission of Kagyu school came to Tibet over the Indian Yogis Naropa, Tilopa, Marpa then Milarepa, Gampopa, authentic old buddhist yogic practices have been passed over to students still following these instructions throughout many Kagyu Monasteries and institutes worldwide.

Yogacara ("Yoga Adepts"), which is also known as Cittamatra ("Consciousness Only") is an important philosophical school within Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

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Yoga among Christians: Some Christians have changed the practice of yoga to accommodate their own approach to spirituality and out of concern for associating with spiritual practices of other non-Christian religions. Some Christians oppose major components of yoga outright. According to Donal O'Mathuna, Ph.D., and Walt Larimore, M.D., in their book *Alternative Medicine*, they claim: "Yoga is an alternative therapy that is difficult to wholeheartedly accept or reject. As a set of physical and breathing exercises, it can improve general well-being. As a deeply religious practice with the goal of union with the divine, it is antithetical to biblical Christianity."

Other Christians have embraced many aspects of yoga and have incorporated the practice into their ministry, including the Outstretched ministry of Susan Bordenkirche, author of *Yoga For Christians*. Another book is *An Invitation to Christian Yoga* by Nancy Roth.

Yoga and Tantra: Yoga is often mentioned in company with Tantra. While the two have deep similarities, most traditions distinguish them from one another.

They are similar in that both amount to families of spiritual texts, practices, and lineages with origins in the Indian subcontinent. (Coincidentally, both have been popularized to some extent in the West, with perhaps a shallower understanding of their nature). It should be noted however that for the most part, we are speaking of *different* families of texts, lineages, etc.

Their differences are variously expressed. Some Hindu commentators see yoga as a process whereby body consciousness is seen as the root cause of bondage, while tantra views the body as a means to understanding, rather than as an obstruction. It must be said that in India, tantra often carries quite negative connotations involving sexual misbehavior and black magic. Nevertheless, most forms of tantra follow more mainstream social mores. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika is generally classified as a Hindu tantric scripture.

Tantra has roots in the first millennium CE, and incorporates much more of a theistic basis. Almost entirely founded on Shiva and Shakti worship, Hindu tantra visualizes the ultimate Brahman as Param Shiva, manifested through Shiva (the passive, masculine force of Lord Shiva) and Shakti (the active, creative feminine force of his consort, variously known as Ma Kali, Durga, Shakti, Parvati and others). It focuses on the kundalini, a three and a half-coiled 'snake' of spiritual energy at the base of the spine that rises through the chakras until union between Shiva and Shakti (also known as samadhi) is achieved. (Some Hindu yoga teachers, however, have adopted these concepts.)

Tantra emphasises mantra (Sanskrit prayers, often to gods, that are repeated), yantra (complex symbols representing gods in various forms through intricate geometric figures), and rituals that range from simple murti (statue representations of deities) or image worship to meditation on a corpse! While tantric texts (see kaularvatantra, mahanirvana tantra) and teachers (*e.g.* Abhinava Gupta) may seem odd and highly arcane from the point of view of classical yoga, that these incorporate yoga concepts seems clear.

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Notable Yogis: Many dedicated individuals have influenced the practice of yoga, and spread awareness of yoga throughout the world. Centuries ago, such individuals included Meera from the Bhakti tradition, Shankaracharya from the Jnana Yoga tradition, Patanjali, who formalized the system of Raja Yoga, are just a few examples. In the late 1800s, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, a Bhakti Yogi, brought about a rebirth of yoga in India. A devotee of Mother Kali and a teacher of Advaita Vedanta, he preached that "all religions lead to the same goal."

The noted Indian author Sri Aurobindo translated and interpreted Yogic scriptures, such as the Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita. His epic poem *Savitri* is a treasure of Hindu Yogic literature, among the longest poems ever written in English. He also founded Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, which continues to propagate the practice of Integral Yoga, which is Aurobindo's synthesis of the four main Yogas (Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Raja).

Other Indian yogis who inspired their countrymen include Swami Rama Tirtha, and Swami Sivananda who authored over 300 books on yoga and spirituality.

Gopi Krishna was a Kashmiri office worker and spiritual seeker who wrote best-selling autobiographical accounts of his spiritual experiences.

During the early twentieth century, many yogis travelled to the west to spread knowledge of Yoga.

Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna's disciple, is well known for introducing Yoga philosophy to many in the west, as well as reinvigorating Hinduism in a modern setting during India's freedom struggle. Swami Sivananda (1887-1963), founder of the Divine Life Society lived most of his life in Rishikesh, India. He wrote an impressive 300 books on various aspects of Yoga, religions, philosophy, spirituality, Hinduism, moral ethics, hygiene and health. He was a pioneering Yogi in bringing Yoga to the west and throughout the world. He was clear, simple and precise in all his teachings. His motto being: "Serve. Love. Give. Meditate. Purify. Realise."

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), a practitioner of Kriya Yoga, taught Yoga as the binding force that reconciled Hinduism and Christianity. Yogananda founded the Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles, in 1925. His book Autobiography of a Yogi continues to be one of the best-selling books on yoga. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada popularised Bhakti Yoga for Krishna in many countries through his movement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, (popularly known as the Hare Krishna movement) which he founded in 1966. His followers, known for enthusiastic chanting in public places, brought Bhakti Yoga to the attention of many westerners.

In 1955, the socio-spiritual organization Ananda Marga (the path of bliss) was founded by P.R. Sarkar also known as Shrii Anandamurti. Based on tantric yoga, his teaching emphasizes social service in the context of a political, economic and cultural theory; or "self-realization and service to all."

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Also during this period, many yogis brought greater awareness of Hatha yoga to the west. Some of these individuals include students of Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, who taught at Mysore Palace from 1924 until his death in 1989; these students include Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, B.K.S. Iyengar, Indra Devi and Krishnamacharya's son T.K.V. Desikachar.

About the same time, the Beatles' interest in Transcendental Meditation served to make a celebrity of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Mimamsa

Mimamsa, a Sanskrit word meaning "investigation", is also the name of a school of Indian Philosophy whose primary enquiry is into the nature of dharma. Mimamsa is better known as Purva Mimamsa since it investigates the Purva or "earlier" portions of the Vedas. The foundational text for the Mimamsa school is the Purva Mimamsa Sutras of Jaimini. An important proponent of this school is Kumarila Bhatta. Dharma as understood by Mimamsa can be loosely translated into English as Virtue, Morality or Duty. The Mimamsa school traces the source of the knowledge of dharma neither to sense-experience nor inference, but to verbal cognition (*i.e.* knowledge of words and meanings). Mimamsa believes that all words and meanings exist eternally, and the human mind only perceives them temporarily.

Thus the Rishis or seers *saw* (not with the physical, but the metaphysical eye) the eternal words and meanings of the Vedas that constitute dharma and gave them to mankind as a revelation. The Mimamsa school held dharma to be equivalent to following the commandments of the Vedas and related scriptures such as the Smritis, which involved the performance of Vedic rituals. Seen in this light, Mimamsa is essentially Vedic Ethics, and places great weight on the performance of Karma or action as enjoined by the Vedas. This school's most valuable contribution to Hinduism was its formulation of well-accepted rules of Vedic interpretation. The beliefs of the Mimamsa school include rejection of a creator God as well as scriptures on dharma outside of the Vedic tradition, and acceptance of the existence of svarga or heaven awaiting the person who has acted righteously in his or her life.

Mimamsa does not pay as much attention to Moksha or salvation as does Vedanta (also known as Uttara Mimamsa-investigation into the Uttara or "later" portions of the Vedas). At a later stage, however, the Mimamsa school changed its views in this regard and began to teach the doctrines of God and Moksha (liberation). While Mimamsa does not receive much scholarly attention these days, its influence can be felt in the life of the practising Hindu. All Hindu ritual, ceremony and religious law is influenced by it.

Brahman

According to Adi Shankara, God, the Supreme Cosmic Spirit or Brahman is the One, the whole and the only reality. Other than Brahman, everything else, including the universe, material objects and individuals are false. Brahman is at best described as that

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infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent, incorporeal, impersonal, transcendent reality that is the divine ground of all Being. It (grammatically neutral, but exceptionally treated as masculine), though not a substance, is the basis of the material world, which in turn is its illusionary transformation. Brahman is not the effect of the world. Brahman is said to be the purest knowledge itself, and is illuminant like a source of infinite light.

Due to ignorance (*avidy*), the Brahman is visible as the material world and its objects. The actual Brahman is attributeless and formless. It is the Self-existent, the Absolute and the Imperishable (not generally the object of worship but rather of meditation). Brahman is actually indescribable. It is at best, "Sacchidananda". Also, Brahman is free from any kind of differences. It does not have any *sajtiya* (homogeneous) differences because there is no second Brahman. It does not have any *vijtiya* (heterogeneous) differences because there is nobody in reality existing other than Brahman. It has neither *svagata* (internal) differences, because Brahman is itself homogeneous.

Though Brahman is self-proved, Adi Shankara also proposed some logical proofs:

- *Shruti* — the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras describe Brahman in almost exact manner as Adi Shankara. This is the testimonial proof of Brahman.
- Psychological — every person experiences his soul, or atman. According to Adi Shankara, Atman= Brahman. This argument also proves the omniscience of the Brahman.
- Teleological — the world appears very well ordered; the reason for this cannot be an unconscious principle. The reason must be due tc the Brahman.
- Essential — Brahman is the basis of this created world.
- Perceptible feeling — many people, when they achieve the *turiya* state, claim that their soul has become one with everything else.

He is the most important contribution of Adi Shankara. *My* is that complex illusionary power of Brahman which causes the Brahman to be seen as the distinct material world. It has two main functions — one is to "cover up" Brahman from the human minds, and the other is to present the material world in its stead. My is also indescribable. It is neither completely real nor completely unreal—hence indescribable. Its shelter is Brahman, but Brahman itself is untouched by the profanity of My, just like a magician is not tricked by his own magic. My is temporary and is destroyed with "true knowledge". This Myvda of Adi Shankara was highly criticized and misunderstood. Bhaskaracharya described Adi Shankara to be indebted to the Buddhists for his concept of My. The term Maya however appears in the Bhagavad Gita 7.14 and many Upanishads.

The concept of My seems to be a hypothesis. Since according to the Upanishads only Brahman is real, but we see the material world to be real, Adi Shankara explained the anomaly by the concept of this illusionary power My.

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Status of the World: Advaita teachings that the universe is false often confuse people. Adi Shankara says that the world is not true, it is an illusion, but this is because of some logical reasons. Let us first analyse Adi Shankara's definition of Truth, and hence why the world is not considered true.

- Adi Shankara says that whatever thing remains eternal is true, and whatever is non-eternal is untrue. Since the world is created and destroyed, it is not true.
- Truth is the thing which is unchanging. Since the world is changing, it is not true.
- Whatever is independent of space and time is true, and whatever has space and time in itself is untrue.
- Just as one sees dreams in sleep, he sees a kind of super-dream when he is waking. The world is compared to this conscious dream.
- The world is believed to be a superimposition of the Brahman. Superimposition cannot be true.

On the other hand, Adi Shankara claims that the world is not absolutely false. It appears false only when compared to Brahman. In the pragmatic state, the world is completely true—which occurs as long as we are under the influence of Maya. The world cannot be both true and false at the same time; hence Adi Shankara has classified the world as indescribable. The following points suggest that according to Adi Shankara, the world is not false (Adi Shankara himself gave most of the arguments):

- If the world were false, then with the liberation of the first human being, the world would have been annihilated. However, the world continues to exist even if a human attains liberation.
- Adi Shankara believes in Karma, or good actions. This is a feature of this world. So the world cannot be false.
- The Supreme Reality Brahman is the basis of this world. The world is like its reflection. Hence the world cannot be totally false.
- False is something which is ascribed to inexistent things, like Sky-lotus. The world is a logical thing which is perceived by our senses.

Consider a scientific logic. A pen is placed in front of a mirror. One can see its reflection. To our eyes, the image of the pen is perceived. Now, what should the image be called? It cannot be true, because it is an image. The truth is the pen. It cannot be false, because it is seen by our eyes.

Shvara: Shvara when man tries to know the attributeless Brahman with his mind, under the influence of Maya, Brahman becomes the Lord. Ishvara is Brahman with Maya— the manifested form of Brahman. Adi Shankara uses a metaphor that when the "reflection" of the Cosmic Spirit falls upon the mirror of Maya, it appears as the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord is true only in the pragmatic level — his actual form in the transcendental level is the Cosmic Spirit.

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Ishvara is Saguna Brahman or Brahman with innumerable auspicious qualities. He is all-perfect, omniscient, omnipresent, incorporeal, independent, Creator of the world, its ruler and also destroyer. He is causeless, eternal and unchangeable — and is yet the material and the efficient cause of the world. He is both immanent (like whiteness in milk) and transcendent (like a watch-maker independent of a watch). He may be even regarded to have a personality. He is the subject of worship. He is the basis of morality and giver of the fruits of one's Karma. However, he himself is beyond sin and merit. He rules the world with his Maya — his divine power. This association with a "false" knowledge does not affect the perfection of Ishvara, in the same way as a magician is himself not tricked by his magic. However, while Isvara is the Lord of Maya and she (*i.e.*, Maya) is always under his control, the living beings (*jiva*, in the sense of humans) are the servants of Maya (in the form of ignorance). This ignorance is the cause of the unhappiness and sin in the mortal world. While Ishvara is Infinite Bliss, humans are miserable. Ishvara always knows the unity of the Brahman substance, and the Mayic nature of the world. There is no place for a Satan or devil in Hinduism, unlike Abrahamic religions. Advaitins explain the misery because of ignorance. Ishvara can also be visualized and worshipped in anthropomorphic form as deities such as Vishnu, Krishna or Shiva.

Now the question arises as to why the Supreme Lord created the world. If one assumes that Ishvara creates the world for any incentive, this slanders the wholeness and perfection of Ishvara. For example, if one assumes that Ishvara creates the world for gaining something, it would be against his perfection. If we assume that He creates for compassion, it would be illogical, because the emotion of compassion cannot arise in a blank and void world in the beginning (when only Ishvara existed). So Adi Shankara assumes that Creation is a sport of Ishvara. It is His nature, just as it is man's nature to breathe.

The sole proof for Ishvara that Adi Shankara gives is Shruti's mentions of Ishvara, as Ishvara is beyond logic and thinking. This is similar to Kant 's philosophy about Ishvara in which he says that "faith" is the basis of theism. However, Adi Shankara has also given few other logical proofs for Ishvara, but warning us not to completely rely on them:

- The world is a work, an effect, and so must have real cause. This cause must be Ishvara.
- The world has a wonderful unity, coordination and order, so its creator must have been an intelligent being.
- People do good and sinful work and get its fruits, either in this life or after. People themselves cannot be the giver of their fruits, as no one would give himself the fruit of his sin. Also, this giver cannot be an unconscious object. So the giver of the fruits of Karma is Ishvara.

Status of God: Some people claim that in Adi Shankara's philosophy, there is no place for a personal God (Ishvara), because Ishvara is also described as "false". He appears as Ishvara because of the curtain of Maya. However, as described earlier, just as the world

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is true in the pragmatic level, similarly, Ishvara is also pragmatically true. Just as the world is not absolutely false, Ishvara is also not absolutely false. He is the distributor of the fruits of one's Karma. In order to make the pragmatic life successful, it is very important to believe in God and worship him. In the pragmatic level, whenever we talk about Brahman, we are in fact talking about God. God is the highest knowledge theoretically possible in that level. Devotion (Bhakti) will cancel the effects of bad Karma and will make a person closer to the true knowledge by purifying his mind. Slowly, the difference between the worshipper and the worshipped decreases and upon true knowledge, liberation occurs.

Atman: The swan is an important motif in Advaita. It symbolises two things: first, the swan is called *hamsah* in Sanskrit. Upon repeating this *hamso* indefinitely, it becomes *so-aham*, meaning, "I am That". Second, just as a swan lives in water but its feathers are not soiled by water, similarly a liberated Advaitin lives in this world full of maya but is untouched by its illusion.

The soul or the self (Atman) is exactly equal to Brahman. It is not a part of Brahman that ultimately dissolves into Brahman, but the whole Brahman itself. Now the arguers ask that how can the individual soul, which is limited and one in each body, be the same as Brahman? Adi Shankara explains that the soul is not an individual concept. Atman is only one and unique. It is a false concept that there are several Atmans. Adi Shankara says that just as the same moon appears as several moons on its reflections on the surface of water covered with bubbles, the one Atman appears as multiple atmans in our bodies because of Maya. Atman is self-proven, however, some proofs are discussed—*e.g.*, a person says "I am blind", "I am happy", "I am fat" etc. So what is this ego here? Only that thing is the ego which is there in all the states of that person — this proves the existence of Atman, and that consciousness is its characteristic. Reality and Bliss are also its characteristics. By nature, Atman is free and beyond sin and merit. It does not experience happiness or pain. It does not do any Karma. It is incorporeal.

When the reflection of atman falls on Avidya (ignorance), atman becomes *jiva* — a living being with a body and senses. Each jiva feels as if he has his own, unique and distinct Atman, called jivatman. The concept of jiva is true only in the pragmatic level. In the transcendental level, only the one Atman, equal to Brahman, is true.

Adi Shankara exposed the relative nature of the world and established the truth of the Advaita by analysing the three states of experience of the atman — waking (vaishvanara), dreaming (swapna), and deep sleep (sushupti). This idea of a fourth state of consciousness (turiya) apart from these three states is presented in the Mandukya Upanishad.

Salvation: Liberation or Moksha (akin to Nirvana of the Buddhists) — Advaitins also believe in the theory of reincarnation of souls (Atman) into plants, animals and humans according to their karma. They believe that suffering is due to Maya, and only knowledge (called Jnana) of Brahman can destroy Maya. When Maya is removed, there exists ultimately no difference between the Jiva-Atman and the Brahman. Such a state of bliss

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when achieved while living is called Jivan mukti. While one is in the pragmatic level, one can worship God in any way and in any form, like Krishna as he wishes, Adi Shankara himself was a proponent of devotional worship or Bhakti. But Adi Shankara believes that while Vedic sacrifices, puja and devotional worship can lead one in the direction of jnana, true knowledge, they cannot lead one directly to Moksha.

Theory of Creation: In the pragmatic level, Adi Shankara believes in the Creation of the world through *Satkaryavada*. It is like the philosophy of Samkhya, which says that the cause is always hidden into its effect—and the effect is just a transformation of the cause. However, Samkhya believes in a sub-form of *Satkaryavada* called Parinamvada (evolution)—whereby the cause results in an action. Instead, Adi Shankara believes in a sub-form called *Vivartavada*. According to this, the effect is merely a superimposition of its cause—like its illusion. *e.g.*, In darkness, a man often confuses a rope to be a snake. But this does not mean that the rope has actually transformed into a snake.

At the pragmatic level, the universe is believed to be the creation of the Supreme Lord Ishvara. Maya is the divine magic of Ishvara, with the help of which Ishvara creates the world. The serial of Creation is taken from the Upanishads. First of all, the five subtle elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) are created from Ishvara. Ether is created by Maya. From ether, air is born. From air, water is born. From water, earth is born. From a proportional combination of all five subtle elements, the five gross elements are created, like the gross sky, the gross fire, etc. From these gross elements, the universe and life are created. This series is exactly the opposite during destruction.

Some people have criticized that these principles are against *Satkaryavada*. According to *Satkaryavada*, the cause is hidden inside the effect. How can Ishvara, whose form is spiritual, be the effect of this material world? Adi Shankara says that just as from a conscious living human, inanimate objects like hair and nails are formed, similarly, the inanimate world is formed from the spiritual Ishvara.

Status of Ethics: Some claim that there is no place for ethics in Advaita, because everything is ultimately illusionary. But on analysis, ethics also has a firm place in this philosophy—the same place as the world and God. Ethics, which implies doing good Karma, indirectly helps in attaining true knowledge. The basis of merit and sin is the Shruti (the Vedas and the Upanishads). Truth, nonviolence, service of others, pity, etc. are Dharma, and lies, violence, cheating, selfishness, greed, etc. are adharma (sin).

Advaita Vedanta in a Summary: Adi Shankara's treatises on the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras are his principal and almost undeniably his own works. Although he mostly adhered to traditional means of commenting on the Brahma Sutra, there are a number of original ideas and arguments. He taught that it was only through direct knowledge of nonduality that one could be enlightened.

Adi Shankara's opponents accused him of teaching Buddhism in the garb of Hinduism, because his non-dualistic ideals were a bit radical to contemporary Hindu philosophy.

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However, it may be noted that while the Later Buddhists arrived at a changeless, deathless, absolute truth after their insightful understanding of the unreality of samsara, historically Vedantins never liked this idea. Although Advaita also proposes the theory of Maya, explaining the universe as a "trick of a magician", Adi Shankara and his followers see this as a consequence of their basic premise that Brahman is real. Their idea of Maya emerges from their belief in the reality of Brahman, rather than the other way around.

Adi Shankara was a peripatetic orthodox Hindu monk who traveled the length and breadth of India. The more enthusiastic followers of the Advaita tradition claim that he was chiefly responsible for "driving the Buddhists away". Historically the decline of Buddhism in India is known to have taken place long after Adi Shankara or even Kumarila Bhatta (who according to a legend had "driven the Buddhists away" by defeating them in debates), sometime before the Muslim invasion into Afghanistan (earlier Gandhara).

Although today's followers of Advaita believe Adi Shankara argued against Buddhists in person, a historical source, the *Madhaviya Shankara Vijayam*, indicates that Adi Shankara sought debates with Mimamsa, Samkhya, Nyaya, Vaisheshika and Yoga scholars as keenly as with any Buddhists. In fact his arguments against the Buddhists are quite mild in the *Upanishad Bhashyas*, while they border on the acrimonious in the *Brahma Sutra Bhashya*.

The *Vishistadvaita* and *Dvaita* schools believe in an ultimately *saguna* Brahman. They differ passionately with Advaita, and believe that his *nirguna* Brahman is not different from the Buddhist *Sunyata* (wholeness or zeroness) — much to the dismay of the Advaita school. A careful study of the Buddhist Sunyata will show that it is in some ways metaphysically similar as Brahman. Whether Adi Shankara agrees with the Buddhists is not very clear from his commentaries on the Upanishads. His arguments against Buddhism in the Brahma Sutra Bhashyas are more a representation of Vedantic traditional debate with Buddhists than a true representation of his own individual belief.

The Impact of Advaita: Advaita Vedanta philosophy had a tremendous impact on the Hindu system of Tantra and also served to bolster Yogic (see Yoga) ideas of the ultimate Self, Brahman/Atman, being One. Advaita rejuvenated much of Hindu thought and also spurred on debate that led to the expounding of Vishishtadvaita (qualified nondualism) and Dvaita (dualism). Advaita is definitely a very influential philosophy of India.

Advaita and Science: According to some followers of Advaita, it may very well be a place where the scientific world intersects with the spiritual world. They point to the relationships between mass, frequency, and energy that 20th century physics has established and the Advaitic 'Unity of the Universe' as the common ground. They feel that these relationships, formalized as equations by Planck and Einstein, suggest that the whole mesh of the Universe blend into a One that exhibits itself as many (namely, mass, energy, wave etc.), and that this follows Advaita's view that everything is but the manifestation

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of an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent "One". It must be remembered however, that none of these physicists have talked of an 'omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent "One"'. They also connect the De Broglie waves of modern physics to Aum in Hindu philosophy. However, scientists in India and abroad clarify that the de Broglie waves (or matter waves) are neither optical nor acoustic waves, but are "just functions of a probability distribution of finding a particle, which may be represented as a Fourier sum of constituent probability waves."

However, notable scientists like Erwin Schrodinger and Robert Oppenheimer were also Vedantists. Fritjof Capra's book, The Tao of Physics, is one among several that pursue this viewpoint as it investigates the relationship between modern, particularly quantum physics and the core philosophies of various Eastern religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism.

It must be noted that Advaita does not share the same ground on science as other schools of philosophy do. For example, Adi Shankara rejected the idea of momentariness of the universe in his Brahma Sutra commentary since Brahman is immanent in the Universe, while Buddhists affirm that the universe on its own accord, due to the causality of the dharmas, is constantly changing. The Dvaita-enthusiasts on the contrary, blame Adi Shankara for inconsistency, since he adopts the view that the Universe is momentary in many of his other works like the *Upanishad Bhashya*. Dvaita-enthusiasts see the Universe as a creation of God, while Advaitins see it as a manifestation of Brahman; Buddhists on the other hand see it as a flux of changes, originating from natural phenomena leading to its formation.

Mahavakya: Mahavakya, or "the great sentences", state the unity of Brahman and Atman. They are four in number and their variations are found in other Upanishads.

Visistadvaita: Vishisthadvaita is a qualified monism in which God alone exists but admits plurality. By holding such beliefs, Vishisthadvaita is said to be the midway between Advaita and Dvaita by few. The book, "All about Hinduism" by Swami Sivananda discusses aspects of Vishisthadvaita, a theological school whose most important proponent was Ramanuja.

The Philosophy: In more specific terms Vishishtadvaita conclusions may be briefly summarised as below.

The Absolute Supreme Reality referred to as Brahman, is a Transcendent Personality with infinite superlative qualities. He is Lord Vishnu, also known as Narayana. He creates the other two members of the Trimurti, namely, Creator Brahma and Shiva, the Lord of Deluge. Narayana is the Absolute God. The Soul and the Universe are only parts of this Absolute and hence, Vishishtadvaita is panentheistic. The relationship of God to the Soul and the Universe is like the relationship of the Soul of Man to the body of Man. Individual souls are only parts of Brahman. God, Soul and Universe together form an inseparable unity which is one and has no second. This is the non-duality part.

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Matter and Souls inhere in that Ultimate Reality as attributes to a substance. This is the qualification part of the non-duality.

Souls and Matter are only the body of God. Creation is a real act of God. It is the expansion of intelligence. Matter is fundamentally real and undergoes real revelation. The Soul is a higher mode than Matter, because it is conscious. It is also eternally real and eternally distinct. Final release, that comes, by the Lord's Grace, after the death of the body is a Communion with God. This philosophy believes in liberation through one's Karmas (actions) in accordiance with the Vedas, the Varna (caste or class) system and the four Ashramas (stages of life), along with intense devotion to Vishnu. Individual Souls retain their separate identities even after moksha. They live in Fellowship with God either serving Him or meditating on Him. The philosophy of this school is Sri Vaishnavism, a branch of Vaishnavism.

The succession of great Master-Expositors and spiritual giants of Vishishtadvaita school starts with the twelve Alwars, who left behind an imperishable legacy of Tamil devotional poetry in the form of 4000 songs, now called the Nalayira-prabandham.

Natha Muni: Natha-muni of the ninth century AD, the foremost Acharya of the Vaishnavas, collected the Tamil prabandhams, classified them, made the redaction, set the hymns to music and spread them everywhere. He is said to have received the divine hymns straight from Nammalvar, the foremost of the twelve Alwars, by yogic insight in the temple at Alwar Thirunagari, which is located near Tirunelveli.

Yamunacharya: Yamunacharya, who renounced a kingship and spent his last days in the service of the Lord at Srirangam and in laying the fundamentals of the Vishishtadvaita philosophy by writing four basic works on the subject.

Ramanuja: Ramanuja was the first propagator of Vishishtadvaita philosophy on a national scale. He undertook three major tasks of his Master upon himself. The first was his masterly commentary called the Shri-Bhashya, on the Brahma Sutras where he claimed to have proven that the interpretations of the Upanishads according to the Advaita school were not tenable. His second vow was to perpetuate the name of Parashara, the author of Vishnu purana. This he did by calling Bhatta, the son of one of his disciples by that name and making him write a commentary on Vishnu Sahasranama. The third vow was to perpetuate the name of Nammalwar, which he did by causing a commentary to be written on Nammalwar's Tamil Veda, Tiruvai-mozhi, which represents the cream of Vishishtadvaita philosophy. The message that Ramanuja left for posterity and the world went home not only in his homeland, but in the entire country up to distant Kashmir. Sri Ramanuja spent about 14 years of the most productive part of his life in Melukote near Mysore, Karnataka, where he could continue his work on Vishishtadvaita in peace under the patronage of the maharajahs of Mysore.

Vedanta Desika: Vedanta Desika, one of the foremost learned scholars of medieval India, wrote more than a hundred works in Sanskrit and Tamil. All are characterised

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by their versatility, deep spiritual insight, ethical fervour and excellent expressions of devotional emotion in delightful style. His Paduka-sahasram is a classic example. He was a great teacher, expositor, debater, poet, philosopher, thinker and defender of the faith of Vaishnavism.

Pillai Lokacharya: Pillai Lokacharya, who is considered as the real founder of the tenkalai (Southern Learning) sect of Vaishnavism.

Dvaita: Dvaita (originally called Tattvavada), a school of Vedanta (the most widespread Hindu philosophy) founded by Shri Madhvacharya, stresses a strict distinction between God and souls. According to Madhva, souls are not created by God but depend on Him to evolve or transform. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami explains dualism in his book, *Dancing with* Siva, by stating that in dualism, God is seen as the efficient cause of the universe and not as the material cause. He is the potter causing the clay to emerge, rather than serving as the source of the clay itself.

Dvaita Philosophy: Like Ramanuja Shri Madhvacharya espoused a Vaishnava theology that understands Brahman to be endowed with attributes and a personal God, Vishnu. By Brahman, he referred to Vishnu, as per his statement (brahmashabdashcha vishhnaveva) that Brahman can only refer to Vishnu. Madhva states that Vishnu is not just any other deity, but is rather the singular, all-important and supreme one. Vishnu is always the primary object of worship, and all others are regarded as subordinate to Him. The deities and other sentient beings are graded among themselves, with Vayu, the god of life, being the highest, and Vishnu is eternally above them.

Dvaita, or Dualistic philosophy, also known as Bheda-vada, Tattva-vada, and Bimba-pratibimba-vada, is the doctrine propounded by Ananda Tirtha (also known as Madhvacharya) that asserts that the difference between the individual soul or jiva, and God, (Ishvara or Vishnu), is eternal and real. Actually, this is just one of the five differences that are so stated — all five differences that constitute the universe are eternal.

The Dvaita doctrine was summarized by Vyasa Tirtha as comprising nine tenets or prameyas.

Impact of Dvaita Movement

- Madhva's Dualistic view, along with Shankara's Advaita or Nondualism and Ramanuja's Qualified Nondualism or Vishishtadvaita form some core Indian beliefs on the nature of reality.
- Madhva is considered to be one of the influential theologians in Hindu history. He revitalized an Hindu monotheism in light of attacks, theological and physical, by foreign invasion. Great leaders of the Vaishnava Bhakti movement, in Karnataka, for example, Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa were strong proponents of the Dvaita tradition. Also, the famous Hindu saint, Raghavendra Swami, was a leading figure in the Dvaita tradition.

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- Madhva's theology heavily influenced those of later scholars such as Nimbarka, Vallabha, and Caitanya. B.N.K. Sharma notes that Nimbarka's theology is a loose re-write of Madhva's in its most essential aspects. Vallabha even "borrowed without acknowledgement" a verse from Madhva's sarva-shastrartha-sangraha'. The followers of Caitanya claim a link to Madhva, though such a link is not historically tenable or theologically plausible.
- Madhva's singular contribution was to offer a new insight and analysis of the classical Vedantic texts — the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahma Sutra, Mahabharata, Pancharatra, and Puranas — and place uncompromising duality, which had been ravaged by attacks from Advaita, on a firm footing. Before Madhva, Nondualism was rejected by others such as the Mimamsa tradition of Vedic exegesis, and by the Nyaya tradition of classical logic. However, it was only he who could build a cogent alternative system of Vedanta that could take on Advaita in full measure.

Comparison to Mainstream Hinduism: Some teachings of Sri Madhvacharya look different from mainstream Hinduism. One example is his doctrine of eternal damnation. Generally Hindus believe in the eventual salvation of every soul. Many of the doctrines in the Dvaita traditions resemble those of strict monotheism that is predominant amongst followers of Semitic religions. Dvaita provides a greater role to Bhakti than other schools of Vedanta. Followers of Dvaita believe in the supremacy of Lord Vishnu over other deities including Shiva and do not believe in the Hindu concept of Trinity, Trimurti of Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva. Shiva is worshipped as a subordinate god. Though this appears intolerant, it is because of the strong monotheistic belief in a non-Impersonal God unlike Advaita for which the identity of God does not matter as it is Nirguna. Historically, Dvaita scholars have been involved in vigorous debates against other schools of thought, especially Advaita. Whereas Adviata preaches that Atman and Brahman are one and the same, which is not evident to the atman till he comes out of a so-called illusion, Sri Madhvacharya puts forward the truth as Brahman (Sri Vishnu) and Atman (soul) to be eternally different, with God always the most superior one. It is the same point that Sri Madhvacharya reinforces in one of his doctrines ... "Yadi Namaparo Na bhaveth Sri Hari, khathamasya vasheth Jagathedhabhooth. Yadi Namanathasya Vashe Sakalam, Khatamevathu nithya suknham Na Bhaveth"

The translation of the above is :

> *"If you feel there is no God,how do you explain as to why you cannot free yourself from the limitations on Earth? If you feel you are the one in control of everything (as Advaita preaches that Soul and God are one and the same), then how come you don't enjoy happiness always and are also subject to sorrow and pain (as God is supposed to be an eternity of happiness)?".*

Maharshi Kapil: Maharishi Kapila is a Vedic sage traditionally considered to be the original proponent of the *Samkhya* system of philosophy but there are no known writings

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by him that deal with the *Samkhya* system as it is understood today. He is described as an incarnation of Vishnu within the Puranas, famous for teaching a process of liberation known as bhakti yoga.

History: Very little historical data is known for sure regarding Maharishi Kapila's life. He is said to have lived in the Indian subcontinent, some say around 500 BC, other accounts give much earlier dates. Tradition has it that Shakyamuni Buddha studied the Samkhya system before his "awakening," putting Kapila's birth at least before that time. He is also mentioned by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita as the greatest of all perfected beings which could possibly move the date back further still:

> *Of all trees I am the banyan tree, and of the sages among the demigods I am Narada. Of the Gandharvas I am Citraratha, and among perfected beings I am the sage Kapila.* *(Bhagavad Gita 10.26)*

His parents are given in the Bhagavata Purana as Kardama Muni and Devahuti. After his father left home, Kapila instructed his mother Devahuti in the philosophy of yoga and worship of Lord Vishnu, enabling her to achieve both liberation (moksha), and pure love of God.

Teachings: Kapiladev's teachings are quoted exstensiveley within the Srimad Bhagavatam especially:

- *"My appearance in this world is especially to explain the philosophy of Sankhya, which is highly esteemed for self-realization by those desiring freedom from the entanglement of unnecessary material desires. This path of self-realization, which is difficult to understand, has now been lost in the course of time. Please know that I have assumed this body of Kapila to introduce and explain this philosophy to human society again."*
- *"When one is completely cleansed of the impurities of lust and greed produced from the false identification of the body as "I" and bodily possessions as "mine," one's mind becomes purified. In that pure state he transcends the stage of so-called material happiness and distress." (3.25.16)*
- *"The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Supreme Soul, and He has no beginning. He is transcendental to the material modes of nature and beyond the existence of this material world. He is perceivable everywhere because He is self-effulgent, and by His self-effulgent luster the entire creation is maintained."*
- *"The glory of the Lord is always worth singing, for His glories enhance the glories of His devotees. One should therefore meditate upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead and upon His devotees. One should meditate on the eternal form of the Lord until the mind becomes fixed."*

Birth of the Ganges: Maharshi Kapila is a major figure in the story associated with the Hindu holiday of Makar Sankranti, about the birth of the Ganges River, which involves King Sagar of Ayodhya, an ancestor of Rama. King Sagar had performed the Aswamedha

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sacrifice ninety-nine times. Each time a horse was sent around the earth Indra the King of the Heaven grew jealous and kidnapped the horse, hiding it in the hermitage of Kapila Muni during the hundredth sacrifice.

The 60,000 sons of Sagar found the horse, and believing Kapila to be the abductor assaulted him. Kapila turned the assailants to ashes. Bhagirath, a grandson of King Sagar, came to Kapila begging him to redeem the souls of the 60,000. Kapila replied that only if the Ganges descended from heaven and touched the ashes of the 60,000 would they be redeemed.

Gotama: Gotama was an Indian philosopher and logician who wrote the Nyya Sutras, considered to be the foundation of the Nyya school of philosophy.

Gotama's precise dates are uncertain. In the past he has been assigned to various times between the sixth and third centuries BCE, though modern scholarship places him between the second and third centuries CE. His name has occasionally led him to be confused with Gautama Buddha. He is sometimes given the honorific titles "Akapda" ("eye-footed") and "Dirghatapas" ("long-penance"). He is also sometimes accorded the religious titles "Rishi" or "Maharshi".

In the *Nyya Sutras* Gotama developed and extended the Vaiaeika epistemological and metaphysical system through 528 aphorisms. Later commentaries expanded, expounded, and critically discussed Gotama's work, the first being by Vtsyyana (c.450–500 CE), followed by the *Nyyavrttika* of Uddyotakra (c. 6th–7th century), Vcaspati Mira's *Ttparyatik* (9th century), Udayana's *Ttparyapariuddhi* (10th century), and Jayanta's *Nyyamanjari* (10th century). These not only discussed Gotama's thought, but also that of his successors.

Kanada: Kanada was a Hindu sage who founded the philosophical school of Vaisheshika. He is considered as the father of Atom theory. He probably lived around 600 BCE according to some accounts. It is believed that he was born in Prabhas Kshetra (near Dwaraka) in Gujarat, India. His area of study was Rasavtam, considered to be a type of alchemy. In his text, the Vaishashik Darshana, he describes an atomic theory more than a century before Democritus developed one in ancient Greece. He believed that all objects were comprised of nine elements: earth, water, light, wind, ether, time, space, mind and soul

Patanjali: Patanjali is the compiler of the *Yoga Sutra*, a major work containing aphorisms on the practical and philosophical wisdom regarding practice of Raja Yoga. ("Yoga" in traditional Hinduism involves inner contemplation, a rigorous system of meditation practice, ethics, metaphysics, and devotion to the one common soul, God, or Brahma/Atman.)

Patanjali is the reputed author of the *Yoga Sutra*, as well as commentary on Pnini's Sanskrit grammar which is called 'Mahabhashya'. There are also many ayurvedic texts attributed to him. Nearly all scholars believe these texts were actually written by different people in different eras.

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Desiring to teach yoga to the world, he is said to have fallen (pat) from heaven into the open palms (anjali) of a woman, hence the name Patanjali.

The *Yoga Sutra* probably dates around BC 200. Patanjali has often been called the founder of Yoga because of this work, although in reality is more a major figure. The *Yoga Sutra* is a treatise on Raja Yoga, built on the Samkhya school and the Hindu scripture of the Bhagavad Gita. Yoga is also found in the Puranas, Vedas and Upanishads. Still, this work is certainly a major work among the great Hindu scriptures and certainly is the basis of Raja Yoga. Patanjali's Yoga is one of the six schools of Hindu Philosophy. They give us the earliest reference to the popular term Ashtanga Yoga which translates literally as the eight limbs of yoga. They are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

The Mahabhashya: The Mahabhashya (great commentary) of Patanjali on the celebrated Ashtadhyayi of Panini is one of the three most famous works in Sankrit grammar. It was with Patanjali that Indian linguistic science reached its definite form. The system thus established is extemely detailed as to shiksha (phonology, including accent) and vyakarana (morphology). Syntax is scarecely touched, but nirukta (etymology) is discussed, and these etymologies naturally lead to semantic explanations. People interpret his work to be a defense of Panini, whose Sutras are elaborated meaningfully. He also attacks Ktyyana rather severely. But the main contributions of Patanjali lies in the treatment of the principles of grammar enunciated by him.

Jamini: Maharshi Jaimini was a student of Vyasa Maharishi, whom Jaimini refers to by the name "Badarayana". Jaimini is believed to have lived around the 32nd century BC, at the beginning of the period known, in the Hindu calendar, as the Kali Yuga. His sutras include not only the Rudramsa, Shasthamsa and Saptamsa, but also lagnas (like Varnada Lagna) and yogas (such as Shakti Yoga and Raja Yoga). His Purva Mimamsa Sutras contains about 3,000 sutras discussing duty (dharma), and is the foundational text of the Mimamsa school. Though there had been earlier efforts to systematize knowledge by teachers such as Alekhana and Karsnajini (mentioned by Jaimini), their works have not been passed on. Jaimini's definition of dharma is an act which is endorsed by the Vedas and related scriptures and conducive to human well-being.

Vyasa: Vyasa is an important and much revered figure in the Hindu tradition and its literature. He is considered to be an ideal Brahmarishi - omniscient, truthful, purest of the pure and possessor of knowledge of the essence of Brahman.

The Legend of Vyasa: Vyasa appears for the first time as the author and an important character in the Hindu epic Mahabharata. The epic, whilst having its roots in historical events centuries before the common era, is an extraordinarily long compendium of legend, myth, philosophy and semi-historical material about ancient India. It is impossible to point out when the 'Historical' Vyasa lived or disentangle a factual story from the legendary material contained in the epic. According to the Mahabharata, he was the son

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of Satyavati, a ferryman's daughter, and the wandering sage Parashara. He was born on an island in the River Yamuna. The place is near a town Kalpi in Jaluan district in Uttar Pradesh. He was dark in colour and hence was named Krishna; as he was born on an island (Sanskrit Dweepa), he was also called Dwaipayana. Thus he is generally known as Krishna-Dwaipayana. The child grew up to be an adult as soon as he was born; adopting the life of an ascetic, he soon became one of the greatest Rishi (Sages).

In the Puranas, especially the Vishnu-Purana and Bhagavata-Purana, he is considered an incarnation—Avatara of Vishnu.

Vyasa is considered to be one of the seven immortals in Hindu mythology.

'Veda' Vyasa: It is traditionally held by Hindus that the sage classified the primordial single Veda into four. Hence he was called Veda Vyasa, or "Splitter of the Vedas," the splitting being a feat that allowed mortals to understand the divine knowledge of the Veda. The word vyasa means split, differentiate, or describe. This title is the most popular way of referring to him.

It has been debated whether Vyasa was a single person or a class of scholars who did the splitting. The Vishnu-Purana has an interesting theory about Vyasa. The Hindu view of the universe is that of a cyclic phenomenon that comes into existence and dissolves repeatedly. Each cycle is presided over by a number of Manus, one for each Manvantara, that has four ages, Yugas of declining virtues. The Dvapara is the third Yuga. The Purana says:

> *In every third world age (Dvapara), Vishnu, in the person of Vyasa, in order to promote the good of mankind, divides the Veda, which is properly but one, into many portions. Observing the limited perseverance, energy, and application of mortals, he makes the Veda four-fold, to adapt it to their capacities; and the bodily form which he assumes, in order to effect that classification, is known by the name of Veda-vyasa. Of the different Vyasas in the present Manvantara and the branches which they have taught, you shall have an account. Twenty-eight times have the Vedas been arranged by the great Rishis in the Vaivasvata Manvantara... and consequently eight and twenty Vyasas have passed away; by whom, in the respective periods, the Veda has been divided into four. The first... distribution was made by Svayambhu (Brahma) himself; in the second, the arranger of the Veda (Vyasa) was Prajapati... (and so on up to twenty-eight).*

Author of Mahabharata: Vyasa is traditionally known as author of this epic. But he also features as an important character in it. His mother later married the king of Hastinapura, and had two sons. Both sons died without an issue and taking recourse to an ancient practice called Niyoga where a chosen man can father sons with the widow of a person who dies issueless, she requests Vyasa to produce sons on behalf of her dead son Vichitravirya. Vyasa fathers the princes Dhritarashtra and Pandu (by Ambika and

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Ambalika, the wives of dead king. The sequence of events also leads to a third son, Vidura, by a serving maid to the queens. While these are 'legally' not his sons, another son Shuka, born of a celestial nymph, is considered his true spiritual heir. He thus was the grandfather of both the warring parties of the Mahabharata, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. He makes occasional appearances in the story as a spiritual guide to the young princes.

In the first book the Mahabharata, and is said that he asked Ganesha to aid him in writing it down. It is said that Ganesha imposed a condition that Vyasa narrate the story without pause, and Vyasa made a counter-condition that Lord Ganesh understand the verse before he transcribed it. This is supposed to explain the complicated Sanskrit used in some sections of the Mahabharata, recited by Vyasa when he wanted a break.

Author of Puranas: In addition to the epic, he is also credited with the writing of the eighteen major, if not all, Puranas. His son Shuka is the narrator of the major Purana Bagavata-Purana.

Vyasa in Buddhism: Vyasa appears as Kanha-dipayana (the Pali version of his name) in two Jataka tales: the Kanha-dipayana Jataka and Ghata Jataka. Whilst the former in which he appers as the Bodisattva has no relation to his tales from the Hindu works, his role in the latter one has parallels in an important event in the Mahabhrata.

In the 16th book of the epic, Mausala Parva, the end of the Vrishnis, clansmen of Vyasa's namesake and Vishnu incarnate Krishna is narrated. The epic says:

> *One day, the Vrishni heroes saw Vishvamitra, Kanwaand Narada arrived at Dwaraka. Afflicted by the rod of chastisement wielded by the deities, those heroes, causing Samba to be disguised like a woman, approached those ascetics and said, 'This one is the wife of Vabhru of immeasurable energy who is desirous of having a son. Ye Rishis, do you know for certain what this one will bring forth?Those ascetics, attempted to be thus deceived, said: 'This heir of Vasudeva, by name Samba, will bring forth a fierce iron bolt for the destruction of the Vrishnis and the Andhakas.*

The important Bhagavata-Purana narrates:

> *The sages Visvamitra, Asita, Kanva, Durvasa, Bhrigu, Angira, Kasyapa, Vâmadeva, Atri, Vasishthha, along with Nârada and others, [once] stayed in the house of the lord of the Yadus [Krishna]...The young boys of the Yadu dynasty playing [there] approached them with Samba the son of Jambavati dressed up in woman's clothes. Taking hold of their feet they, feigning humility, impudently asked: 'This black-eyed pregnant woman wishing for a son, o learned ones, too embarrassed to ask it herself, is asking you whether you, with your vision never clouded, can tell if she'll give birth to a son or not?' The sages thus tricked said angered to the boys, o Kng: 'For you, o fools, she'll give birth to a mace which will destroy the dynasty!*

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The Ghata Jataka has a different spin on it:

> *The Vrishnis, wishing to test Kanha-dipayana's powers of clairvoyance, played a practical joke on him. They tied a pillow to the belly of a young lad, and dressing him up as a woman, took him to the ascetic and asked when the baby would be born. The ascetic replied that on the seventh day the person before him would give birth to a knot of acacia wood which would destroy the race of Vasudeva. The youths thereupon fell on him and killed him, but his prophecy came true .Notably, he is not the Bodhisattva in the Ghata Jataka.*

In the Arthashastra: The only non-religious book in which Vyasa has an interesting entry is the Arthashastra of Chanakya. In chapter 6, it says:

> *Whosoever is of reverse character, whoever has not his organs of sense under his control, will soon perish, though possessed of the whole earth bounded by the four quarters. For example: Bhoja, known also by the name, Dandakya, making a lascivious attempt on a Brahman maiden, perished along with his kingdom and relations; so also Karala, the Vaideha... Vátapi in his attempt under the influence of overjoy to attack Agastya, as well as the corporation of the Vrishnis in their attempt against Dvaipayana.'*

This reference matches the Jataka version and has lead some scholars to speculate that in the older versions Vyasa died in this attack, though the Arthashastra is actually speaking about the destruction of the attackers.

Author of Brahma Sutra: The Brahma-Sutra is attributed to Badarayana, which makes him the proponent of the crest-jewel school of Hindu philosophy, *i.e.*, Vedanta. As the island on which Vyasa was born is said to have been covered by Badara (Indian jujube) trees, he is known as Badarayana. Though traditionally, Vyasa is considered the Badarayana who wrote the Sutras, many historians think these were two different personalities.

Author of Yoga Bhashya: This text is a commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Vyasa is credited with this work also, though this is impossible, if Vyasa's immortality is not considered, as it is a later text.

Adi Sankara: Adi Shankara also known as di Zaekarcrya (the first Shankara in his lineage) and Zaekara Bhagavatpdcrya (the teacher at the feet of God), c. 788 – 820 CE, was the first philosopher in the tradition of Advaita Vedanta, a sub-school of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy, to formulate its doctrine. He taught the unity of the soul and God. He viewed God as simultaneously personal and attributeless. He held seminal debates with other philosophers to refute their doctrines. In the Smrta tradition, he is regarded as an incarnation of the god, Shiva.

Born in the South Indian state of Kerala, he toured India, propagating his teachings. He founded four mathas (abbeys) at the four cardinal directions. These institutions,

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mainly followed by Hindu Smartas, play an important role in the propagation of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy and Hinduism.

Life: The traditional source for accounts of Adi Shankara's life are the Shankara Vijayams (IAST *Zaekara Vijayas*). Literally meaning *Victory of Shankara*, these poetical works contain much historical material interspersed with legends. The most important among these biographies are the *Mdhaviya Zaekara Vijayac-*, the *nandagiriya Zaekara Vijayac*, the *Cidvilsiya Zaekara Vijayac-*, and the *Keraiya Zaekara Vijayac-*. According to these texts, Adi Shankara was born in Kalady, Kerala, India, to a Namboothiri brahmin couple, Shivaguru (IAST *Zivaguru*) and Aryamba (IAST *rymb*) and that he lived for thirty two years.

Birth and Childhood: Adi Shankara's parents were childless for many years. They prayed at the Vadakkumnathan (Vaccala) temple in Thrissur, Kerala, for the birth of a child. Legend has it that Shiva appeared to both husband and wife in their dreams, and offered them a choice: a mediocre son who would live a long life, or an extraordinary son who would not live long. Both the parents chose the latter; thus a son was born to them. He was named Shankara (bestower of happiness), in honour of Shiva (one of whose epithets is Shankara).

His father died while Shankara was very young. Shankara's upanayan, the inititiation into student-life, was performed at the age of five. As a child, Shankara showed remarkable scholarship, mastering the four Vedas by the age of eight. Following the customs of those days, Shankara studied and lived at the home of his teacher. It was customary for students and men of learning to receive Bhikc (alms) from the laity; on one occasion, while accepting Bhikc, Shankara came upon a woman who had only a single dried amalaka fruit to eat. Rather than consuming this last bit of food herself, the pious lady gave away the fruit to Shankara as Bhikc. Moved by her piety, Shankara composed the Kanakadhr Stotram on the spot. Legend has it that on completion of the stotra, golden amalaka fruits were showered upon the woman by Lakcmi, the Goddess of wealth.

Sannyasa

Hindu philosophy

Schools

Samkhya • Nyaya

Vaisheshika • Yoga

Purva Mimamsa • Vedanta

Schools of Vedanta

Advaita • Vishishtadvaita

Dvaita

Important figures

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Kapila • Gotama

Kanada • Patanjali

Jaimini • Vyasa

Adi Shankara • Ramanuja

Madhva

From a young age, Shankara was attracted to sannyasa (monastic life). His mother was against his becoming an monk, and refused him her formal permission. However an incident occurred that resulted in her giving assent to his monkhood. Shankara was bathing in the Purna River near his house, when a crocodile gripped his leg and began to drag him into the water. Only his mother was nearby, and it proved impossible for her to rescue him. Shankara then told his mother that he was on th verge of death; if she would give him her formal permission verbally, he would at this moment renounce the world and die a monk. At the end of her wits, his mother agreed; Shankara immediately recited the mantras that made a renunciate of him and awaited death. However, the crocodile released him and swam away. Shankara emerged unscathed from the river.

With the permission of his mother, Shankara left Kerala and travelled towards North India in search of a Guru. On the banks of the Narmada River, he met Govinda Bhagavatpada, the disciple of Gaudapada. When Govinda Bhagavatpada asked Shankara's identity, he replied with an extempore verse that brought out the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Govinda Bhagavatapada was impressed and took Shankara as his disciple.

Adi Shankara was commissioned by his Guru to write a commentary on the Brahma Sutras and propagate the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. The Madhaviya Shankaravijaya states that Adi Shankara calmed a flood from the Reva River by placing his *kamanalu* (water pot) in the path of the raging water, thus saving his Guru, Govinda Bhagavatpada, who was engaged in Samdhi (meditation) in a cave nearby. On his mission to spread the Advaita Vedanta philosophy, Adi Shankara travelled to Kashi, where a young man named Sanandana from Choladesha in South India, became his first disciple. In Kashi, Adi Shankara had an encounter with an untouchable- on his way to the Vishwanath Temple, he came upon an untouchable with four dogs. When asked to move aside by Shankara's disciples, the untouchable replied: "Do you wish that I move my ever lasting tman (Self), or this body made of food?" Understanding that the untouchable was none other than god Shiva, and his dogs the four Vedas, Shankara prostrated himself before him, composing five shlokas known as Manisha Panchakam.

On reaching Badari in the Himalayas, he wrote the famous *Bhashyas* (commentaries) and *Prakarana granthas* (philosophical treatises). Afterwards he taught these commentaries to his disciples. Some, like Sanandana, were quick to grasp the essence; the other disciples thus became jealous of Sanandana. In order to convince the others of Sanandana's inherent superiority, Adi Shankara summoned Sanandana from one bank of the Ganga River, while he was on the opposite bank. Sanandana crossed the river by walking on the lotuses that

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were brought out wherever he placed his foot. Adi Shankara was greatly impressed by his disciple and gave him the name Padmapda (lotus-footed one). The sage, Vedavysa, visited Adi Shankara in the guise of an old Brhmana. Adi Shankara debated with the Brhmana for over eight days when at last, Vyasa revealed his real identity and blessed Adi Shankara.

Meeting with Mandana Mishra: One of the most famous debates of Adi Shankara was with the ritualist Mandana Mishra (IAST *Manana Mira)*. Mandana Mishra's Guru was the famous Mimamsa philosopher, Kumarila Bhamma. Shankara sought a debate with Kumarila Bhamma and met him in Prayag where he had buried himself in a slow burning pyre to repent for sins committed against his Guru: Kumarila Bhamma had learnt Buddhist philosophy incognito from him in order to be able to refute it. This constitues a sin according to the Vedas. Kumarila Bhamma thus asked Adi Shankara to proceed to Mahicmati (known today as Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh) to meet Mandana Mishra and debate with him instead.

Adi Shankara had a famous debate with Mandana Mishra in which the wife of Mandana Mishra, Ubhaya Bhrati, was the referee. After debating for over fifteen days, Mandana Mishra accepted defeat. Ubhaya Bhrat+ then challenged Adi Shankara to have a debate with her in order to 'complete' the victory. This debate was to be on the subject of *kmastra* (science of sex-love). But Adi Shankara, being a sannyasi, had no knowledge of this subject; thus, after requesting for some time before entering into this fresh debate, he entered the body of a king by his yogic powers and acquired the knowledge of kmastra. Later, however, Ubhaya Bhrati declined to debate with him and allowed Mandana Mishra to accept sannyasa with the monastic name, Surevarcrya as per the agreed rules f the debate.

Dig-vijaya: Adi Shanara then travelled with his disciples to Maharashtra and Srisailam. In Srisailam, he composed Shivanandalahari, a devotional hymn to Shiva. The Madhaviya Shankaravijayam says that when Shankara was about to be sacrificed by a Kapalika, the god Narasimha appeared to save Shankara on Padmapada's prayer to him. So Adi Shankara composed the Laksmi-Narasimha stotra to praise Narasimha. He next travelled to Gokarna, the temple of Hari-Shankara and the Mkkambika temple at Kollur. At Kollur he accepted a boy believed to be dumb by his parents, as his disciple. He gave him the name, Hastmalakcrya (one with the amalaka fruit on his palm, *i.e.*, one who has clearly realized the Self). Next, he visited Zangeri to establish the Zrada Pamham and made Tomakcrya his disciple.

After this, Adi Shankara began a *Dig-vijaya* (missionary tour) for the propagation of the Advaita philosophy by controverting all philosophies opposed to it. With King Sudhanva of Kerala as companion, Shankara passed through Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Vidarbha. He then started towards Karnataka where he encountered a band of armed Kapalikas. King Sudhanva, with his army, resisted and defeated the kapalikas. They safely reached Gokarna where Shankara defeated in debate the Shaiva scholar, Neelakanta.

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Proceeding to the west in Dwarka, Shankara defeated the Vaicnavas in debate. Bhamma Bhskara of Ujjayini, the proponent of Bhedbeda philosophy, was humbled. All the scholars of Ujjayini (also known as Avanti) accepted Adi Shankara's philosophy. He then defeated the Jainas at a place called Bahlika. Later, he had an encounter with a tantrik, Navagupta at Kamarupa. Navagupta pretended to have become a disciple, but later caused to develop a rectal fistula. However, Adi Shankara was soon cured and Navagupta later died of the same disease.

Adi Shankara thus travelled throughout India, from the South to Kashmir and Nepal, preaching to the local populace and debating philosophy with Hindu, Buddhist and other scholars and monks along the way.

Accession to Sarvajnapitha: Adi Shankara visited *Sarvajnapimha* in Kashmir (now in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir). The Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya states this temple had four doors for scholars from the four cardinal directions. The southern door (representing South India) had never been opened, indicating that no scholar from South India had entered the Sarvajna Pitha. Adi Shankara opened the southern door by defeating in debate all the scholars there in all the various scholastic disciplines such as Mimamsa, Vedanta and other branches of Hindu philosophy; he ascended the throne of Transcendent wisdom of that temple. The Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya states that Goddess Saraswati (goddess of knowledge and all literary arts) herself proclaimed the unquestioned scholarly triumph of Adi Shankara on this occasion.

Shankara then travelled to Kedarnath and attained videha mukti (final liberation) at the age of thirty two. However, there are variant traditions on the location of his last days. The Kanchi matha followers believe he achieved *videha mukti* in Kanchi. Another tradition expounded by *Keraliya Shankaravijaya* places his place of death as Vadakkunnathan (Vaccala) temple in Thrissur, Kerala.

Dates: Modern scholarship is agreed on the 788 – 820 CE date, though it has proved impossible to reach agreement on Adi Shankara's precise dates of birth or death. Some Shankara Mamhas, however, ascribe much earlier dates to him. If these dates were true, they would require moving back the date of Buddha (wich serves as an anchor for modern academic history of India). Of the major Shankara Mamhas active today, the ones at Kanchi, Dwaraka, and Puri ascribe the dates 509 – 477 BCE to Adi Shankara. The Zaegeri Zrad Pamham, on the other hand, accepts the 788–820 CE dates. According to Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati's biography of Adi Shankara, published in his book *Sannyasa Darshan*, Adi Shankara was born in Kalady, Kerala, in 686, and attained mahasamadhi at Kedarnath, Uttaranchal, in 718.

Mathas: Adi Shankara founded four Mamhas (abbeys), to guide the Hindu religion. These are at Sringeri in Karnataka in the south, Dwaraka in Gujarat in the west, Puri in Orissa in the east, and Jyotirmath (Joshimath) in Uttaranchal in the north. Hindu tradition states that he put in charge of these mathas his four main disciples:

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Sureshwaracharya, Hastamalakacharya, Padmapadacharya, and Totakacharya respectively. The heads of the mathas trace their authority back to these figures. Each of the heads of these four mathas takes the title of Shankaracharya (the learned Shankara) after the first Shankara. The matha at Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, claims that it was founded by Adi Shankara.

Advaita Vedanta in a summary: Adi Shankara's treatises on the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras are his principal and almost undeniably his own works. Although he mostly adhered to traditional means of commenting on the Brahma Sutra, there are a number of original ideas and arguments. He taught that it was only through direct knowledge of Brahman that one could be enlightened.

Adi Shankara's opponents accused him of teaching Buddhism in the garb of Hinduism, because his non-dualistic ideals were a bit radical to contemporary Hindu philosophy. However, it may be noted that while the Later Buddhists arrived at a changeless, deathless, absolute truth after their insightful understanding of the unreality of samsara, historically Vedantins never liked this idea. Although Advaita proposes the theory of Maya, explaining the universe as a "trick of a magician", Adi Shankara and his followers see this as a consequence of their basic premise that Brahman alone is real. Their idea of Maya emerges from their belief in the reality of Brahman, rather than the other way around.

Historical and Cultural Impact: At the time of Adi Shankara's life, Hinduism had began to decline because of the influence of Buddhism and Jainism. Hinduism had become divided into innumerable sects, each quarelling with the others. The followers of Mimamsa and Sankhya philosophy were atheists, in so much that they did not believe in God as a unified being. Besides these atheists, there were numerous theistic sects. There were those who rejected the Vedas, like the Charvakas.

Adi Shankara held debates with the leading scholars of all these sects and schools of philosophy to controvert their doctrines. He unified the theistic sects into a common framework of Shanmata system. In his works, Adi Shankara stressed the importance of the Vedas, and his efforts helped Hinduism regain strength and popularity. He travelled on foot to various parts of India to restore the study of the Vedas.

Even though he lived for only thirty-two years, his impact on India and on Hinduism cannot be stressed enough. He reintroduced a purer form of Vedic thought. His teachings and tradition form the basis of Smartism and have influenced Sant Mat lineages. He is the main figure in the tradition of Advaita Vedanta. He was the founder of the Dasanmi Sampradya of Hindu monasticism and *bagmata* of Smarta tradition. He introduced the *Pancyatana* form of worship.

Adi Shankara, along with Madhva and Ramanuja, was instrumental in the revival of Hinduism. These three teachers formed the doctrines that are followed by their respective sects even today. They have been the most important figures in the recent history of Hindu

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philosophy. In their writings and debates, they provided polemics against the non-Vedantic schools of Sankhya, Vaisheshika etc. Thus they paved the way for Vedanta to be the dominant and most widely followed tradition among the schools of Hindu philosophy. The Vedanta school stresses most on the Upanishads (which are themselves called Vedanta, *End or culmination of the* Vedas), unlike the other schools that gave importance to texts authored by their founders. The Vedanta schools have the belief that the Vedas, which include the Upanishads, are unauthored, forming a continuous tradition of wisdom transmitted orally. Thus the concept of *apaurusheyatva* (being unauthored) came to be the guiding force behind the Vedanta schools. However, along with stressing the importance of Vedic tradition, Adi Shankara gave equal importance to the personal experience of the student. Logic, grammar, Mimamsa and allied subjects form main areas of study in all the Vedanta schools.

A well known verse, recited in the Smarta tradition, in praise of Adi Shankara is:

Zruti salute the compassionate abode of the Vedas, Smritis and Puranas known as Shankara Bhagavatpada, who makes the world auspicious.

Works of Adi Shankara: Adi Shankara's works deal with logically establishing the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta as he saw it in the Upanishads. He formulates the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta by validating his arguments on the basis of quotations from the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures. He gives a high priority to *svnubhava* (personal experience) of the student. A large portion of his works is polemical in nature. He directs his polemics mostly against the Sankhya, Bauddha, Jaina, Vaisheshika and other non-vedantic Hindu philosophies.

Traditionally, his works are classified under Bhacya (*commentary*), Prakarana gratha (*philosophical treatise*) and Stotra (*devotional hymn*). The commentaries serve to provide a consistent interpretation of the scriptural texts from the perspective of Advaita Vedanta. The philosophical treatises provide various methodologies to the student to understand the doctrine. The devotional hymns are rich in poetry and piety, serving to highlight the helplessness of the devotee and the glory of the diety. Of his works, the authenticity of the Viveka Chudamani and a few *Bhashyas* are questioned.

Adi Shankara wrote *Bhashyas* on the ten major Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. In his works, he quotes from Shveshvatara, Kaushitakai, Mahanarayana and Jabala Upanishads, among others. *Bhashyas* on Kaushitaki, Nrisimhatapani and Shveshvatara Upanishads are extant but the authenticity is doubtful. Adi Shankara's commentary on the Brahma Sutras is the earliest one available on this topic. However Adi Shankara mentions older commentaries like those of Dravida, Bhartiprapancha and others.

In his Brahma Sutra Bhashya, Adi Shankara cites the examples of Dharmavyadha, Vidura and others who were born with the knowledge of Brahman acquired in previous births. He mentions that the effects cannot be prevented from working on account of their

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present birth. He states that the knowledge that arises out of the study of the Vedas could be had through the Puranas and the Itihasas. In the Taittiriya Upanishad Bhashya 2.2, he says:

It has been established that everyone has the right to the knowledge (of Brahman) and that the supreme goal is attained by that knowledge alone.

Ramanuja: Sri Ramanuja Acharya (traditionally dated 1017–1137 BC) was an Indian philosopher and is recognized as the most important saint of Sri Vaishnavism. He held the Vishishtadvaita or qualified Non-dualist belief that the world and Brahman were united, like a soul and a body are. His version of Indian Nondualism differed from Adi Shankara's because he acknowledged the existence of differences, and believed that the identity of an object as a part was as important as the unity of the whole. The Vaishnava Theology espoused by Ramanuja posits tht Brahman is not devoid of attributes but is expressed as a personal God, full of infinite good qualities, as Narayana. The Adishesha on whom Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam rests is believed to be Ramanuja.

Ramanuja was born Ilaya Perumal to a smartha brahmin family in the village of Perumbudur, Tamil Nadu, India in 1017 BC. His father was Keshava Somayaji Deekshitar and mother was Kanthimathi in sect of Vadama.From a young age, his intelligence and ability to comprehend highly abstract philosophical points were legendary. He took initiation from Yadavaprakasa, a renowned Advaitic scholar. Though his new guru was highly impressed with his analytical ability, he was quite concerned by how much emphasis Ramanuja placed on bhakti. After frequent clashes over interpretation, Yadavaprakasa decided the young Ramanuja was becoming too much of a threat and plotted a way to kill him. However, Ramanuja's cousin Govinda Bhatta (a favourite of Yadavaprakasa) discovered the plot and helped him escape. An alternative version is that one of Yadavaprakasa's students plotted to kill Ramanuja as a means of pleasing their teacher, but Sri Ramanuja escaped in the afore-mentioned manner. Yadavaprakasa was horrified when learnt about the conspiracy.

After renouncing the life of a house-holder, Ramanuja travelled to Srirangam to meet an aging Yamunacharya, the pre-eminent Vishishtadvaita philosopher of the time. Yamunacharya had died prior to Ramanuja's arrival, but had left three tasks for Ramanuja to carry out.

- Teach the doctrine of Saranagati (surrender) to God as the means to moksha.
- A Visishtadvaita Bhashya should be written for the Brahma Sutras of Vyasa which had previously been taught orally to the disciples of the Visishtadvaita philosophy.
- That the names of Paraara, the author of Vishnu Purafa, and saint Zachakopa should be perpetuated.

Ramanuja pledged to God to do as he had been requested and accepted Yamunacharya as his *Manasika Acharya*. All three tasks were successfully completed.

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Five Acharyas: Swami Ramanuja incorporated teachings from 5 different people who he considered to be his acharyas

1. Peria Nambigal who performed his samasrayana
2. Thirukkotiyur Nambigal : who revealed the meaning of Charama slokam to swami on his 18th trip
3. Thirumalai Nambigal : Ramayana
4. Tirumalai Aandaan : Bhagavad Vishayam
5. Thirukachchi Nambigal : The 6 sentences or Perarulalan

Visishtadvaita Philosophy: Ramanuja's philosophy is referred to as Vishishtadvaita because it combines Advaita (oneness of God) with Vishesha (attributes). The philosophy is monotheistic.

Differences with Sankara: Adi Sankara had argued that all qualities or manifestations that can be perceived are unreal and temporary. They are a result of ignorance. Ramanuja believed them to be real and permanent and under the control of the Brahman. God can be one despite the existence of attributes, because they cannot exist alone; they are not independent entities. They are Prakaras or the modes, Sesha or the accessories, and Niyama or the controlled aspects, of the one Brahman.

In Sri Ramanuja's system of philosophy, the Lord (Narayana) has two inseparable Prakaras or modes, *viz.*, the world and the souls. These are related to Him as the body is related to the soul. They have no existence apart from Him. They inhere in Him as attributes in a substance. Matter and souls constitute the body of the Lord. The Lord is their indweller. He is the controlling Reality. Matter and souls are the subordinate elements. They are termed Viseshanas, attributes. God is the Viseshya or that which is qualified.

History shows that the followers of Sankara are answerless till date to the strong arguments of Ramanuja (in his sri bhashya) and his followers (satadushani of desika). In a bid to escape strong objections raised by Ramanuja and his successors, most advaitins take a disguised route of neo vedantism, where they argue that vaishnavism is one another path to realise brahman. Ironically, the very brahman of Ramanuja and Sankara are different.

Ramanuja opines, wrong is the position of the Advaitins that understanding the Upanishads without knowing and practicing dharma can result in Brahman knowledge. The knowledge of Brahman that ends spiritual ignorance is meditational, not (as Advaitins seem to presume) testimonial or verbal.

In contrast to Sankara, Ramanuja holds, There is no knowledge source in support of the claim that there is a distinctionless (homogeneous) Brahman. All knowledge sources reveal objects as distinct from other objects. All experience reveals an object known in some way or other beyond mere existence. Testimony depends on the operation of distinct

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sentence parts (words with distinct meanings). Thus the claim that testimony makes known that reality is distinctionless is contradicted by the very nature of testimony as a knowledge means. Even the simplest perceptual cognition reveals something (Bessie) as qualified by something else (a broken hoof, "Bessie has a broken hoof," as known perceptually). Inference depends on perception and makes the same distinct things known as does perception.

Against the Advaita contention that perception cannot make known distinctness but only homogeneous being since distinctness cannot be defined, well, sorry, perception makes known generic characters (cowhood and the like) that differentiate things. If what you Advaitins say were true, why should not a person looking for a horse be satisfied with a buffalo? Remembering could not be distinguished from perceiving, because there would be only the one object (being). And no one would be deaf or blind. Furthermore, Brahman would be an object of perception and the other sources (prameya).

He also holds, The Advaitin argument about prior absences and no prior absence of consciousness is wrong. Similarly the Advaitin understanding of a-vidya (not-Knowledge), which is the absence of spiritual knowledge, is incorrect. "If the distinction between spiritual knowledge and spiritual ignorance is unreal, then spiritual ignorance and the self are one."

The Seven Objections to Shankara's Advaita: Ramanuja picks out what he sees as seven fundamental flaws in the Advaita philosophy for special attack: he sees them as so fundamental to the Advaita position that if he is right in identifying them as involving doctrinal contradictions, then Sankara's entire system collapses. He argues:

I. The nature of Avidya. Avidya must be either real or unreal; there is no other possibility. But neither of these is possible. If Avidya is real, non-dualism collapses into dualism. If it is unreal, we are driven to self-contradiction or infinite regress.

II. The incomprehensibility of Avidya. Advaitins claim that Avidya is neither real nor unreal but incomprehensible, (anirvacaniya). All cognition is either of the real or the unreal: the Advaitin claim flies in the face of experience, and accepting it would call into question all cognition and render it unsafe.

III. The grounds of knowledge of Avidya. No pramana can establish Avidya in the sense the Advaitin requires. Advaita philosophy presents Avidya not as a mere lack of knowledge, as something purely negative, but as an obscuring layer which covers Brahman and is removed by true Brahma-vidya. Avidya is positive nescience not mere ignorance. Ramanuja argues that positive nescience is established neither by perception, nor by inference, nor by scriptural testimony. On the contrary, Ramanuja argues, all cognition is of the real.

IV. The locus of Avidya. Where is the Avidya that gives rise to the (false) impression of the reality of the perceived world? There are two possibilities; it could be Brahman's Avidya or the individual soul's (jiva). Neither is possible. Brahman is

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knowledge; Avidya cannot co-exist as an attribute with a nature utterly incompatible with it. Nor can the individual soul be the locus of Avidya: the existence of the individual soul is due to Avidya; this would lead to a vicious circle.

V. Avidya's obscuration of the nature of Brahman. Sankara would have us believe that the true nature of Brahman is somehow covered-over or obscured by Avidya. Ramanuja regards this as an absurdity: given that Advaita claims that Brahman is pure self-luminous consciousness, obscuration must mean either preventing the origination of this (impossible since Brahman is eternal) or the destruction of it- equally absurd.

VI. The removal of Avidya by Brahma-vidya. Advaita claims that Avidya has no beginning, but it is terminated and removed by Brahma-vidya, the intuition of the reality of Brahman as pure, undifferentiated consciousness. But Ramanuja denies the existence of undifferentiated (nirguna) Brahman, arguing that whatever exists has attributes: Brahman has infinite auspicious attributes. Liberation is a matter of Divine Grace: no amount of learning or wisdom will deliver us.

VII. The removal of Avidya. For the Advaitin, the bondage in which we dwell before the attainment of Moksa is caused by Maya and Avidya; knowledge of reality (Brahma-vidya) releases us. Ramanuja, however, asserts that bondage is real. No kind of knowledge can remove what is real. On the contrary, knowledge discloses the real; it does not destroy it. And what exactly is the saving knowledge that delivers us from bondage to Maya? If it is real then non-duality collapses into duality; if it is unreal, then we face an utter absurdity.

He was critical of the caste system. He said, "Does the wearing of a sacred thread make one a Brahmin? One who is devoted to God (Narayana) alone is a Brahmin."

His Sarangati philosophy emphasises that anyone, irrespective of colour, creed, caste, sex and religion can surrender their mind, body and soul to the Lotus foot of Lord Narayana and the God would accept him/her.

Cited from Sri Ramanuja, His Life, Religion, and Philosophy, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, India.

Writings: Ramanuja's most famous work is known as the Sri Bhasya. It is a commentary on the Brahma Sutras.

Gadhya Thrayam (three compositions)-Vaikunta, Sriranga and Saranagati Gadhyam are great works in Vaishnava philosophy.

His other works are:

- Vedanta Sara (essence of Vedanta)
- Vedanta Sangraha (a resume of Vedanta)
- Vedanta Deepa (the light of Vedanta).

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An interesting point in Ramanuja's works is that, He happens to have composed all his works only in the Sanskrit language.

Brindavan: Ramanuja's thiruvarasu (tomb) is located in Srirangam, Tamil Nadu within the temple complex, where he attained his Acharyan Thiruvadi (the lotus foot of his Acharya). His Thirumeni is covered with chandan (sandalwood paste) and saffron, is open to the public.

Madhvacharya: Madhvacharya (1238-1317) was the chief proponent of Tattvavda (True Philosophy), popularly known as Dvaita or dualistic school of Hindu philosophy. It is one of the three most influential Vedanta philosophies. Madhva was one of the important philosophers during the Bhakti movement. He was a pioneer in many ways, going against standard conventions and norms. Madhvacharya is believed by his followers to be the third incarnation of Vayu, aka Mukhyaprana, after Hanuman and Bhima.

Formative Years: Shri Madhvacharya was born as *Vaasudeva* to Madhyageha Bhatta (father) and Vedavati (mother) at Pajaka in Udupi, Karnataka.

The basic tenet of Madhva philosophy is the existence of two kinds of realities, namely "Independent reality" (or svatantra tatva) and "Dependent reality" (or asvatantra tatva).

Independent reality (svatantra)-who/which e refer to as "God". 5 generic names are applicable to God (as per shreemad bhaagavata mahaapuraan). They are "brahman", "para brahman", "aatman", "paramaatman" and "bhagavaan". It is to be noted that by "brahman", aacharya madhva does not mean "chaturmukha brahma". The word "brahman" refers to "brihat" (meaning "big") *i.e.*, the one who/which is the biggest in this universe which, is none other than "God".

In general, aachaarya madhva's important message is that every word, every sound in this entire universe only means God which he equated with Vishnu.

According to Madhva, only Brahman is indepedent in every sense of the word.

Dependent reality (asvatantra) plurality of Jivas and Prakriti or Nature. Both the Jivas and Nature are dependent on Brahman for their very "being" and "becoming". This dependence is expressed metaphorically as *Bimba-pratibimba* (source-reflection) relation. The reflection is in every way dependent on the source that gets reflected.

Madhva's Credo: Madhva was motivated by his four convictions -

1. A determination to remain true to experience above everything.
2. A commitment to sound reasoning
3. A fervent devotion to a personal God (Vishnu) that drove all his actions
4. Fearless tenacity in expounding his vision in the most hostile environments.

Philosophy of Realism: Dvaita school belongs to the Realist school of Indian philosophy, in the same category as Samkhya, Nyaya, Vaisheshika and Purva mimamsa schools. They believe that the universe is a real creation of Brahman. The plurality of souls are bound

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by a "real" bondage due to beginning-less ignorance, and sadhana through Vishnu bhakti is the only way to be released from this bondage. Further, Madhva explains that Jnana or knowledge alone is not sufficient for the release from beginningless avidya or ignorance, since this bondage is sustained by the "Will" of Brahman and so needs Vishnu Prasadam to ultimately break the bonds of My.

Five Differences: Dvaita, or Dualistic philosophy (known severally as Bheda-vada, Tattva-vada, and Bimba-pratibimba-vada), asserts that the difference between the individual soul or jiva, and God, (Ishvara or Vishnu), is eternal and real. Actually, this is just one of the five differences that are so stated — all five differences that constitute the universe are eternal.

The five are given by:

jiiveshvara bheda chaiva jadeshvara bheda tatha

jiiva-bhedo mithashchaiva jada-jiiva-bheda tatha

mithashcha jada-bhedo.ayam prapajncho bheda-panchakah-paramashruti

"The difference between the jiva (soul) and Ishvara (Creator), and the difference between jada (insentient) and Ishvara; and the difference between various jivas, and the difference between jada and jiva; and the difference between various jadas, these five differences make up the universe." From the Paramopanishad a.k.a. Parama-shruti, as quoted by Ananda Tirtha in his 'Vishnu-tattva-vinirnaya'. Another way of saying this is that these five fundamental real differences are between: Selves and Brahman; matter and Brahman; one Self and another Self; matter and Selves; and, matter and matter.

Contrary to the Idealistic schools like Yogacara, Madhyamika buddhism or Advaita, Dvaita maintains that difference is in the very nature of a substance. This is the reason why some refer to the doctrine of Tattvavada (the preferred name) as 'Dvaita'. However, 'Dvaita' is thought to be inadequately representative of the true grain of Tattvavada.

The doctrine of Tattvavada is considered to be eternal (in a flow-like sense, just as Creation is eternal); in historical times, it was revived by Ananda Tirtha, who is also known as Madhvacharya. Because of this, followers of Tattvavada are called Madhvas, meaning followers of Madhva.

Souls are not created by God:

Madhvacharya has established that souls are eternal, and are not created by God as in the Semitic religions. The souls are dependent, not generated by Vishnu but coexist with Him eternally, supported by His will and entirely controlled by Him. The souls, however, are dependent on Him in their pristine nature and in all transformation that they may undergo.

Three Classes of Souls and Eternal Damnation:

Additionally, Madhvacharya differed significantly from traditional Hindu beliefs in his concept of eternal damnation. For example, he divides souls

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into three classes, one class which qualify for liberation, Mukti-yogyas, another subject to eternal rebirth or eternally transmigrating due to samsara, Nitya-samsarins, and significantly, a class that is eventually condemned to eternal hell or Andhatamas, known as Tamo-yogyas.

Madhva followers cite authorities such as Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 17, verses 2 et seq. "There are three types of inclination, which are the self-same natures of the souls, these being satvika, rajasa, and tamasa," Chapter 16, verses 19-20, "These cruel haters, worst among men in the world, I hurl these evil-doers into the wombs of demons only. Entering into demoniacal wombs and deluded, birth after birth, not attaining me, they thus fall, Oh Arjuna, into a condition still lower than that," for their concept of eternal damnation. Madhvacharaya was the first in the recent years who revived the timeless Vaishnava tradition. There were 21 different Bashayas (commenteries) before Sri Madhvacharaya. He is the first to establish the facts of tri-patriate classification of souls. By contrast, most Hindus believe that souls will eventually obtain moksha, even after millions of rebirths.

Madhvacharya's Theology as an Answer to the Eternal Problem of Evil:

By following the concepts of souls not being created by God and classification of the souls, Madhvacharya provides a lucid answer to the problem of evil by seeking a root cause like the intrinsic nature of the soul itself. Often, evil behaviour displayed in the world might not be just the nature of the soul but also depends upon the timeless actions (Karma) of the soul itself.

Impact of Dvaita Movement: Madhva's Dualistic view, along with Shankara's Advaita or Nondualism and Ramanuja's Qualified Nondualism or Vishishtadvaita form some core Indian beliefs on the nature of reality.

Madhva is considered to be one of the influential theologians in Hindu history. He revitalized an Hindu monotheism in light of attacks, theological and physical, by foreign invasion. Great leaders of the Vaishnava Bhakti movement, in Karnataka, for example, Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa were part of the Dvaita traditions. Also, the famous Hindu saint, Raghavendra Swami, was a leading figure in the Dvaita tradition.

Madhvacharaya during his time not only established dvaita philosophy, but also displayed extraordinary strength and skills to show that he is the third avatara of Vayu, who came down to earth to help people suffering from delusional philosophies and guide them in the right path. Madhvacharaya at the age of 79, year 1317, disappeared from the eyes of humans and continue to reside in Upper Badari in his continuing service to his eternal master Sri Vedavyasa.

Narayana pandit Acharya captures Madhvacharaya's life in a beautiful poetic verses in his "Shri Madhva Vijaya" which is in 16 Sarga (chapters), this book is an authentic work composed during his own time. This is a very rare work, there is no evidence of anyone composing works on any major philosopher like this before or after him from other

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disciplines. "Shri Madhva Vijaya" is a composition which captures life history of Mahdvaharaya.

Religious Establishments: The main icon (vigraha) in Udupi of Lord Krishna was established by Madhvacharya. The 8 monasteries (ashta mathas) of Udupi have been following his philosophy since then.

Comparison to Mainstream Hinduism: The teachings of Sri Madhvacharya were in many ways quite radical for his times. One example is his doctrine of eternal damnation. This idea which is prevalent in Abrahamic religions, is generally not endorsed by most schools of Hindu philosophy. Many Western scholars see this and the importance given to *Mukhyaprana*-as the mediator to Brahman-as Christian influence. But Dvaita scholars argue that Madhva has derived these concepts from within the Vedic framework. There are many instances in the Upanishads and Gita that support Madhva's position. They also argue that since the knowledge of whether a Jiva is *Muktiyogya* (liberation-worthy) or *Tamoyogya* (damnation-worthy) is not accessible to the Jiva himself, this philosophy does not discourage sadhana for anyone.

Place of Birth : Pajaka, Udupi

Guru : Achyuta Prajnya

Names : **1. Vasudeva**, as named by his parents

2. Poornaprajnya (One who knows everything)- named after attaining sainthood

3. Anandateertha (One who brings bliss through his preachings)- named after he succeeded his guru

4. Shri Madhvacharya This name is not given to him by any one but it comes from the vedas. There is a hymn in the vedas called "balitthaa sookta" where the term "madhva" has been used to refer to "mukhya praana"

Avatars:

1. Hanuman
2. Bhima Madhvaachaarya declares, in his work "Vishnu-tatva-vinirnaya:", that he was the one who took the avatars of Hanuman and Bhima. Significantly, the only other person who openly makes such a declaration about his original form is Sri Krishna.

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2

ANCIENT HINDU PHILOSOPHY AND VEDAS

Other Theories put Forward to Explain the Phenomenon: There are a number of small children who have reported having memories of past lives prior to their present life, and some also report being able to recall a time between lives. In some cases these children have also reported being in a place like heaven between lives, and sometimes that they were given some degree of choice as to whether and when to be reborn, and even in selecting their future parents.

Some of these children claim that being reborn is not necessarily a punishment for past bad "karma", but rather an opportunity for a soul to grow spiritually. Additional lifetimes could give individual souls a greater opportunity to accomplish more for God, if that is a person's goal, and to develop better character traits. Eastern views of reincarnation vary and several parallels with this idea are to be found in certain branches of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Samsara

From Wikipe In Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and other related religions, samsara or sacsara refers to reincarnation or rebirth in Indian philosophical traditions.

Etymology: Samsara is derived from "to flow together," to go or pass through states, to wander. Mostly a great revolving door between life and death and a new life reincarnated cycle of life. Also known as a game in ancient India.

Cycle of Rebirth: In most Indian philosophical traditions, including the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain systems, an ongoing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is assumed as a fact of nature. These systems differ widely, however, in the terminology with which they describe the process and in the metaphysics they use in interpreting it. Most of these traditions, in their evolved forms, regard Sacsara negatively, as a fallen condition which

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is to be escaped. Some, such as Advaita Vedanta regard the world and Sacsaric participation in it as fundamentally illusory.

Some later adaptations of these traditions identify Sacsara as a mere metaphor.

Sacsara in Hinduism: In some types of Hinduism, Sacsara is seen as ignorance of the True Self, Brahman, and thus the soul is led to believe in the reality of the temporal, phenomenal world. In Hinduism, it is avidya, or ignorance, of one's true self, that leads to ego-consciousness of the body and the phenomenal world. This grounds one in desire and the perpetual chain of karma and reincarnation. The state of illusion is known as Maya. Hinduism had many terms for the state of liberation like moksha, mukti, nirvana, and mahasamadhi.

The Hindu Yoga traditions hold various beliefs. Moksha may be achieved by love of Ishwar/God (see bhakti movement), by psycho-physical meditation (Raja Yoga), by discrimination of what is real and unreal through intense contemplation (Jnana Yoga) and through Karma Yoga, the path of selfless action that subverts the ego and enforces understanding of the unity of all. Advaita Vedanta, which heavily influenced Hindu Yoga, believes that Brahman, the ultimate Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, is the infinite, impersonal reality (as contrasted to the Buddhist concept of shunyata) and that through realization of it, all temporal states like deities, the cosmos and samsara itself are revealed to be nothing but manifestations of Brahman.

Sacsara in Jainism: In Jainism, karma, anuva (ego) and the veil of maya are central.

In Jainism, liberation from samsara is called *moksha* or *mukti*.

Samsara in Surat Shabda Yoga: In Surat Shabda Yoga, the purpose is to realize the individual's *True Self* (Self-Realization), *True Essence* (Spirit-Realization) and *True Divinity* (God-Realization) while living in the human physical body. This *Journey of Soul* involves reuniting in stages with what is called the *Essence of the Absolute Supreme Being*, the Shabd. Attaining self-realization and above also results in *jivan moksha / mukti*, liberation/release from *samsara,* the cycle of karma and reincarnation while in the physical body.

Surat Shabda Yoga Cosmology presents the constitution of the initiate (the microcosm) as an exact replica of the macrocosm. Consequently, the microcosm consists of a number of bodies, each one suited to interact with its corresponding plane or region in the macrocosm. These bodies developed over the yugas through involution (emanating from higher planes to lower planes) and evolution (returning from lower planes to higher planes), including by karma and reincarnation in various states of consciousness.

Tattva

According to the Indian school of Samkhya philosophy, the *Tattva* are a way of directly "experiencing" the 5 alchemical elements. So they are therefore the logical progression of the previous elemental grade where the elements were first discussed and symbolic

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ways of working with them described. The student is then taught a method of directly learning the "theoretical" structure of the elemental worlds.

A Brief History of the Tattvas: There are six main schools of thought on Tattvic philosophy. The original *Tattva* system was developed by the Indian Maharshi Kapila as part of his Samkhya philosophy. This was about 700BCE, but the roots of Tattvic philosophy go back to at least 2000BCE. Kapila's Samkhya philosophy system divides the universe into five basic Tattvic shapes, which when countercharged become 25 Tattvas.

The word Tattva is comprised of two words, *Tat* (meaning *that*) and *Tvam* (meaning *thou*). Tattva basicially means *thatness*, that is, the real being of anything. It is generally translated as meaning *quality*. Further, *Tat* represents the Godhead and *Tvam* the individual, giving a meaning (which fits in well with Hermetic Philosophy) of "That (which is the Universe) art thou." This is similar to the Hermetic axiom of "As above, so below", and is directly related to the concepts of the Macrocosm (*Tat*, Godhead) and Microcosm (*Tvam*, individual).

The Hatha Yoga School of Tattvic Philosophy links the energy found in breathing (Prana) with the cycle of the five Tattvas. The eighth chapter of the *Shivagama* is *The Science of Breath and the Philosophy of the Tattvas*. It is written within this work that "The Universe came out of the Tattvas; it goes on by the instrumentality of the Tattvas; it disappears into the Tattvas; by the Tattvas is known the nature of the Universe."

The Tattvas are the five modifications of the Great Breath, Prana, which is described as the life principle of the Universe (macrocosm) and man (microcosm). Prana consists of an ocean of the five Tattvas. The Buddhist texts of Indian Tantra describe 7 energy centres (chakras) in connection with the five Tattvas. This finds its ultimate refinement in the Tibetan Buddhist fivefold chakra system, which is part of their fivefold division of esoteric symbolism for categorising the Universe. The Tattvas correspond to the five lower chakras in the Indian scheme of energy centres, and to all five psychic centres of the Tibetan chakra scheme.

H.P. Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, based in Adyar, India, derived the bulk of their knowledge on Tattvas from Rama Prasad, who taught the Tattvic philosophy of the Hatha Yoga School. The Theosophists combined these teachings with those of the Esoteric Tibetan Buddhist tradition. On top of this they conjectured two more Tattvas, to make a total of seven, which allowed them to directly match the Tattvas to there sevenfold system, in particular to the seven Chakras.

The *Tattvas* they added were *Adi*, which is egg shaped, and *Anupadaka*, which is a crescent moon containing a radiant white sun.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn incorporated the Theosophical Tattva system, however discarding the sixth and seventh conjectured Tattvas, The Golden Dawn utilised Kapila's Sankhya Tattva system of 25 countercharges. This was the only Eastern concept that the Golden Dawn introduced into their system. It was perhaps influenced by the

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mention of Tattvas in Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Zanoni*, which was very likely the first mention of Tattvas in Western literature. In *Zanoni* the poisoning of the main character was neutralised by the magical visualization of the *Apas* Tattva.

The Golden Dawn system parallels the five Tattvas to the Western Doctrine of the 5 elements, the four primary elements and quintessence.

The Tattvic Philosophy in Western Tradition: The neutrality of this section is disputed. Please see the discussion on the talk page. The Tattvas are the astral form of the Elements, upon which the Physical elements are based. The process of how the Tattvic elements become manifest is a complex process, which will be described briefly below.

In the Tattvic model a solar wind constantly streams forth from the Sun. It is a partially electro-magnetic nitrous gas, which is very subtle and non-physical in nature (experiment show that the solar wind is mostly composed of high-energy electrons and protons). This is the Prana (*Life Matter*) of the Eastern Mysteries. The Earth's magnetic field captures this incorporeal nitre as the wind streams past our planet. This unmanifest substance circulates around the planet in a series of fivefold waves, each of which comprises five sub-waves. These waves are constantly rising and falling. It becomes more and more physical as it passes through our atmosphere. A salt is formed as this nitre passes through water vapour. This is "a most subtle virgin earth," the Prima Materia of the alchemists. Chemically if you could isolate pure NO_3 it would not form a salt on contact with water.

The Tattva flows start at sunrise and flow from Spirit, to Air, to Fire, to Water, to Earth. Each sub-Tattva takes four minutes and 48 seconds to transit a given spot, meaning it takes a total of 24 minutes for each main Tattva. Thus it takes a total of two hours for a primary flow of all five Tattvas to transit. The Earth's electromagnetic field and ley lines are vitalised by these currents. Current Scientific models suggests that earths magnetic field is best explained by Dynamo theory.

All five Tattvas are considered to be *aethers*. The atoms of the *aether* bring the atoms of the atmosphere into the necessary state of vibration for us to perceive it. Each of the Tattvic aethers is related to one of the five senses. Rama Prasad gives the example that Light is the manifestation of the Tejas Tattva (the luminiferous aether) within the atmosphere, that is, matter is brought into the correct visual vibration for us to perceive it. However, physicists and biologists have shown that vision works through a process of photons reflecting off objects and being detected by cells in the eye.

In *Nature's Finer Forces*, Tattvas are defined as the following: "a mode of motion; the central impulse, which keeps matter in a certain vibratory state; a distinct form of vibration. Also, "every form and every motion is a manifestation of these Tattvas singly or in conjunction."

The first statement reflects what hermetic science states of the nature of the alchemical processes, that is, "*to raise the vibrations of matter*" and thus bring it into the condition of harmony, Quintessence. Modern Physics concurs with this ancient knowledge that all

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matter is energy at various vibratory rates.

The second statement, that all matter and motion is a manifestation of the Tattvas is a direct parallel with the Western Doctrine of Elements, which also asserts that all matter is comprised of varying proportions of the subtle elements.

The other direct parallel between the Eastern and Western systems is that Tattvic philosophy asserts that *Akasha* is the most important Tattva. *Akasha* is what Western Tradition calls *Spirit*, or Quintessence, and like the four base elements all deriving from *Spirit*, "it is out of Akasha that every form comes, and it is in Akasha that every form lives."

The Western Tradition's Doctrine of Elements is exemplified by the Enochian system of magic. Compared with the Tattvas, the Enochian system has been more intellectualised. This seems only natural in that (in psychological terms) the Western tradition is one of "thinking" and the Eastern tradition is one of "feeling."

Modern Enochian magicians have proposed a direct correlation between the Elements and the Forces of modern science. This is perhaps very relevant to the Tattvas, in that as "aethers" they are subtle and intangible, something that gives form to matter. Akasha/ Spirit is correlated to the hypothesised "Superforce" of the Grand Unified Field theory of Relativity. Air and Fire are in juxtaposition in Enochian, compared to the Vayu and Tejas of Tattvic Philosophy, but are equated to the weak and strong nuclear forces of physics. Water/Apas is linked to electromagnetism and Earth/Prithivi is linked to Gravity.

Symbols and Colours: Each of the Tattvas has a corresponding symbol and colour. These symbols differ from traditional Western symbols in shape and color, and also vary slightly between the various Tattvic philosophies. Each of the Tattvas and their attributes will be described separately below.

Akasha The Akasha Tattva is associated with the spirit of Western Tradition and is the sonoriferous aether (sound). It is represented by some as a black or indigo Vesica Piscis, which is almond shaped. It represents the womb of the Universal Mother. In other versions, such as the Golden Dawn tradition, Akasha is symbolised by an oval or egg shape. Akasha is "every colour" or "clear." Black can also be seen as the absorption of all other colours, and its "flashing" (complementary) colour is luminous.

The quote given before, that Akasha is the most important Tatva, in that all forms come from and live in it, is of particular importance. The Akasha Tattva, when used as a "doorway" for scrying can allow one to scan for information within what Theosophists have termed the Akashic Record. The Akashic record contains, as the quote states, all forms. It could be compared with the "collective unconscious" of Jungian psychology. It contains all memories of human experience, but beyond it contains all future "history" in seed form.

Vayu or Pavan Vayu or Pavan is the tangiferous aether (touch). It is associated with the element of Air in Western Tradition. It is represented by a sky-blue circle.

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Agni or Tejas Agni or Tejas is the luminiferous aether (sight/light/colour). It is associated with the element of Fire in Western Tradition. It is represented by a red equilateral triangle. The Fire of Tejas is considered to be Agni, which is the Vedic sacrificial fire and the interior fire of Kundalini Yoga.

Aap Aap is the gustiferous aether (taste). It is associated with the element of Water in Western Tradition. It is represented in the Tibetan version as a purple half circle. The Golden Dawn depicted Apas as a white or silver crescent, with the two points up.

Prithvi or Bhumi Prithvi or Bhumi is the odoriferous aether (smell). It is associated with the element of Earth in Western Tradition. It is represented by a yellow square.

The sub-Tattvas are represented by placing a smaller Tattvic symbol within the larger main Tattvic symbol. This gives a total of 25 Tattvas: Spirit of Spirit, Air of Spirit, Fire of Spirit, Water of Spirit, Earth of Spirit; Air of Air, Fire of Air, Water of Air, Earth of Air, Spirit of Air; Fire of Fire, Water of Fire, Earth of Fire, Spirit of Fire, Air of Fire; Water of Water, Earth of Water, Spirit of Water, Air of Water, Fire of Water; & Earth of Earth, Spirit of Earth, Air of Earth, Fire of Earth, Water of Earth.

Clairvoyance and the Tattvas Within the Western Tradition, the Tattvas are primarily used to help develop the faculty of astral clairvoyance.

The symbol of the Tattvas is placed upon cards. Sub-Tattvas are placed within the larger Tattva image. The process of scrying is started by sitting comfortably and gazing fixedly at the Tattvic symbol until it is thoroughly assimilated. The edges of the Tattvic symbol will appear luminous after several minutes, as the flashing (or complementary) colour appears on the retina. This complementary colour is considered to be the astral counterpart of the actual colour. While meditating on the chosen Tattva, one should also "feel" the attributes of the associated element, letting the entire consciousness be filled with the appropriate sensations. For example with the Vayu Tattva, one could imagine a breeze blowing around and through them, concentrating on how this airy breeze feels, smells, tastes and sounds.

Once the Tattva has been completely assimilated the card can be set aside and the eyes closed. The Tattvas symbol should appear in its flashing colour. This symbol serves as a doorway through which one travels. When entering through the symbol one should feel themselves pass through a 'veil' or membrane. Once on the other side, one should take a moment to adjust to their new surroundings, taking note of what the new surroundings consist of.

A guide can be summoned to accompany you on your exploration of the surroundings, who can explain aspects of the environment to you, and take you to important entities who live within the realm (According to 'safety' and 'protocol' various esoteric groups insist on the following: when first met, a guide should be tested with elemental signs, and the highest magickal names associated with the element. If the guide responds correctly to the signs, then it can be followed in good faith.) It is important to show all due courtesy

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to a guide, and thank it for its time and co-operation and bid it farewell. It is also of benefit to ask its permission to summon it again when you next return to this Tattva.

This initial entry point is also where one departs from, stepping backwards through the portal. Once back on the other side, one should visualise the portal closing.

This process is intended to allow one to enter into the actual element (Tattva flow), initially via "active imagination" and eventually by spontaneous clairvoyance. By scrying the astral current we are attempting to see beyond the material manifestation of an element by transmuting the physical Element into its astral state. The intent is to learn about the vital principle, which the element represents. Within the astral this vital principle becomes perceptible to us as living beings of approximately human form. Everything within this astral environment is of a form and appearance that is highly symbolic of the meanings and intentions of what it represents. On the physical plane humans have obscured this process of dressing in a ways not symbolic of their true natures. Most animals however still retain a degree of symbolism, such as bright colours often representing the dangerous nature of the animal (especially in the case of tropical fish, tree frogs, and spiders).

On the astral, Elementals may masquerade for a while in deceptive form, buts its true form is always constant with its Element and character. (More from the 'traditions': To try and 'force' them into assuming their true form one can test them by using God Names, Grade/Elemental signs, Invoking/Banishing forms of the Elemental pentagrams). Deep scanning of an entity's core ideals and feelings allows one to compare how it "feels" with how it "appears," and if the feelings don't match with its outward appearance then deception can be detected.

Trimurti

In Hinduism, the Trimurti (also called *the Hindu trinity*) is a concept that holds that God has three aspects, which are only different forms of one God. The three aspects of God, or "Parabrahman," or God's *personae* are as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. This Trimurti concept is a tenet most strongly held in Smartism, a denomination of Hinduism and rejected by other denominations of Hinduism, such as Vaishnavism. For example, the Dvaita school holds Vishnu alone to be the supreme God and Shiva as subordinate to Vishnu and interpret the Puranas differently. For example, Vijayindra Tirtha, a Dvaita scholar interprets the 18 puranas differently. He interprets that the Vaishnavite puranas as satvic and Shaivite puranas as Tamasic and and that only satvic puranas are considered to be authoritative.

- Brahma-the Source/Creator
- Vishnu-the Preserver/Indwelling-Life
- Shiva-the Transformer (Destroyer-Creator)

The Trimurti itself is conceived of as a deity and artistically represented as a three-faced human figure. Brahma is no longer as relevant as He once was in Hindu writing;

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some would say that focus on the aspect of the all-in-one Devi or of Shakti, the Divine Mother or God's Power personified, has replaced focus on the Source/Creator as Brahma.

According to the Trimurti belief, these three personae of God are simply different aspects of the one and the same God. In this manner, such beliefs are similar to some interpretations of the Christian Trinity such as Sabellianism.

Swami Sivananda, in his book, *All about Hinduism*, noted that "Brahma represents the creative aspect; Vishnu, the preservative aspect; and Shiva, the destructive aspect of Paramatman. These functions are akin to wearing different garbs on different occasions. For example, when you do the function of a judge, you put on one kind of dress. At home you wear another kind of dress. When you do worship in the temple, you wear another kind of dress. You exhibit different kinds of temperament on different occasions. Even so, the Lord does the function of creation when He is associated with Rajas Guna, and He is called Brahma. He preserves the world when He is associated with Sattva Guna, and He is called Vishnu. He destroys the world when He is associated with Tamas Guna, and He is called Shiva or Rudra."

A widely accepted belief is that it represents earth, water, and fire. The earth, or Brahma, is seen as the originator of all life and hence is regarded as the Creator. Water is the sustainer of life and hence is the Preserver and is represented as Vishnu. Fire transforms or consumes life and hence is the Destroyer and is represented as Shiva.

The Trimurti can also represent three individual forms on the different planes of consciousness. On the spiritual plane, the spiritual element is represented by Brahma, the mental/psychic element by Vishnu, and the physiological element by Shiva. On the mental/psychic plane, Brahma is the intuitive and creative thought, Vishnu is intelligence, and Shiva stands for emotions and feelings. The Sky as Brahma, the Sun as Vishnu and the Moon as Shiva form the earthly/physiological plane. Another representation by Adi Shankara, Shiva represents the Nirguna Brahman, Vishnu represents the Saguna Brahman and Brahma the Cosmic Mind.

Various phases of an individual's life are said to be represented by the Trimurti. The first of these phases, that of celibacy and studentship, (Brahmacharya Ashram) – is represented by Brahma. During this phase, knowledge is the individual's constant companion. Knowledge, in this conception, is represented by Goddess Saraswati, who is said to be the consort of Brahma. The second phase of adulthood and household (Grihastha Ashram) is represented by Vishnu. During this phase, the individual fulfils all religious and family obligations by involving oneself in generating wealth, which one uses to sustain oneself and one's family. During this phase wealth is the individual's companion and is represented by Vishnu's consort, Goddess Lakshmi. The third phase is that of old age (Vanaprastha Ashram) and is represented by Shiva. This phase marks the renunciation of one's worldly life for a life void of material pleasures, dedicated to the pursuit of true knowledge. In ancient days, this typically marked the time when a householder, along

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with his wife, left their worldly belongings to spend their life in a forest, just like Lord Shiva leads a homeless life with only the essential belongings. The final phase (Sanyasa Ashram) the individual seeks to merge oneself with the Supreme power (Ishwara). One completes the process of renunciation and he along with his wife lead a life completely untouched by any attachments. The only occupation becomes deep meditation, leading to the individual becoming Ishwara Himself, with his wife as Ishwara's consort becoming the Universal Mother. The three phases of life, represented by the Trinity thus culminates into One underlining the fact that the three are in reality one and the same Ishwara.

In philosophical terms, Brahma is said to be associated with Divinity's Creative Ground of Being, Vishnu is said to be associated with Divinity's Emanated Idea (Logos, Wisdom, or Word), and Shiva is said to be associated with Divinity's Transformative Energy (Flame, Breath, or Spirit).

Evolution of Theology on the Hindu Trinity

The definite settlement of the caste system and the Brahmanical supremacy must probably be assigned to somewhere about the close of the Brahmanas period. Division in their own ranks was hardly favorable to the aspirations of the priests at such a time; and the want of a distinct formula of belief adapted to the general drift of theological speculation, to which they could all rally, was probably felt the more acutely, the more determined a resistance the military class was likely to oppose to their claims. Side by side with the conception of the Brahman, the universal spiritual principle, with which speculative thought had already become deeply imbued, the notion of a Supreme Personal Being, the author of the material creation, had come to be considered by many as a necessary complement of the pantheistic doctrine. But, owing perhaps to his polytheistic associations and the attributive nature of his name, the person of Prajapati seems to have been thought but insufficiently adapted to represent this abstract idea. The expedient resorted to for solving the difficulty was as ingenious as it was characteristic of the Brahmanical aspirations. In the same way as the abstract denomination of sacerdotalism, the neuter brahman, had come to express the divine essence, so the old designation of the individual priest, the masculine term brahma, was raised to denote the supreme personal deity which was to take the place and attributes of the Prajapati of the Brahmanas and Upanishads.

However the new dogma may have answered the purposes of speculative minds, it was not one in which the people generally were likely to have been much concerned; an abstract, colorless deity like Brahman could awake no sympathies in the hearts of those accustomed to worship gods of flesh and blood. Indeed, ever since the symbolical worship of nature had undergone a process of disintegration under the influence of metaphysical speculation, the real belief of the great body of the people had probably become more and more distinct from that of the priesthood. In different localities the principal share of their affection may have been bestowed on one or another of the old gods who was thereby raised

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to the dignity of chief deity; or new forms and objects of belief may have sprung up with the intellectual growth of the people.

In some cases even the worship of the indigenous population could hardly have remained without exercising some influence in modifying the belief of the Aryan race. In this way a number of local deities would grow up, more or less distinct in name and characteristics from the gods of the Vedic pantheon. There is, indeed, sufficient evidence to show that, at a time when, after centuries of theological speculations, some little insight into the life and thought of the people is afforded by the literature handed down to us, such a diversity of worship did exist. Under these circumstances the policy which seems to have suggested itself to the priesthood, anxious to retain a firm hold in the minds of the people, was to recognize and incorporate into their system some of the most prominent objects of popular devotion, and thereby to establish a kind of creed for the whole community-subject to the Brahmanical law.

At the time of the original composition of the great epics two such deities, Shiva or Mahadeva (the great god) and Vishnu, seem to have been already admitted into the Brahmanical system, where they have ever since retained their place; and from the manner in which they are represented in those works, it would, indeed, appear that both, and especially the former, enjoyed an extensive worship. As several synonyms are attributed to each of them, it is not improbable that in some of these we have to recognize special names under which the people in different localities worshipped these gods, or deities of a similar nature which, by the agency of popular poetry, or in some other way, came to be combined with them. The places assigned to them in the pantheistic system were coordinate with that of Brahma; the three deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, were to represent a triple impersonation of the divinity, as manifesting itself respectively in the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe.

It is worthy of note that when the Vedic triad of Soma, Agni and Vayu was still recognized, attempts are made to identify Shiva with Agni,-in one passage in the Mahabharata it is stated that the Brahmins said that Agni was Shiva. Although such attempts at an identification of the two gods remained isolated, they would at least seem to point to the fact that, in adapting their speculations to the actual state of popular worship, the Brahmans kept the older triad distinctly in view, and by means of it endeavoured to bring their new structure into harmony with the ancient Vedic belief.

As regards Vishnu, this god occupies already a place in the Vedic mythology, though by no means one of such prominence as would entitle him to that degree of exaltation implied in his character as one of the three hypostases of the divinity. This belief is not universally held as there are many Vedic verses that utter the oppositive view, *i.e.*, Vishnu's supremacy as a personal supreme God. Moreover, although in his general nature, as a benevolent, genial being, the Vedic god corresponds on the whole to the later Vishnu, the preserver of the world, the latter exhibits many important features for which we look in vain in his prototype, and which most likely resulted from sectarian worship or from

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an amalgamation with local deities. In one or two of them, such as his names Vasudeva and Vaikuntha, an attempt may again be traced to identify Vishnu with Indra, who, as we have seen, was one of the Vedic triad of gods. The characteristic feature of the elder Vishnu is his measuring the world with his three strides, which are explained as denoting either the three stations of the sun at the time of rising, culminating and setting, or the triple manifestation of the luminous element, as the fire on earth, the lightning in the atmosphere and the sun in the heavens. This three strides corresponds with the events that took place when Vishnu incarnated as Vamana.

The male nature of the triad was supposed to require to be supplemented by each of the three gods being associated with a female energy (Shakti). Thus Sarasvati, the goddess of speech and learning, came to be regarded as the Shakti, or consort of Brahma; Sri or Lakshmi, beauty, fortune, as that of Vishnu; and Uma or Parvati, the daughter of Himavat, the god of the Himalaya mountain, as that of Siva. On the other hand, it is not improbable that Parvati, who has a variety of other names, such as Kali (the black one), Durga (the inaccessible one), Mahadevi (the great goddess) enjoyed already a somewhat extensive worship of her own, and that there may thus have been good reason for assigning to her a prominent place in the Brahmanical system.

A compromise was thus effected between the esoteric doctrine of the metaphysical and some of the most prevalent forms of popular worship, resulting in what was henceforth to constitute the orthodox system of belief of the Brahmanical community. Yet the Vedic pantheon could not be altogether discarded, forming part and parcel, as it did, of that sacred revelation (Sruti), which was looked upon as the divine source of all religious and social law, and being, moreover, the foundation of the sacrificial ceremonial on which the priestly authority so largely depended.

The existence of the old gods is, therefore, likewise recognized, but recognized in a very different way from that of the triple "revelation" of divinity. For while the triad represents the immediate manifestation of the eternal, infinite soul while it constitutes, in fact, the Parabrahman itself in its active relation to mundane and seemingly material occurrences, the old traditional gods are of this world, are individual spirits or portions of the Brahma-like men and other creatures, only higher in degree.

To them an intermediate sphere, the heaven of Indra (the svarloka or svarga), is assigned to which man may raise himself by fulfilling the holy ordinances; but they are subject to the same laws of being; they, like men, are liable to be born again in some lower state, and, therefore, like them, yearn for emancipation from the necessity of future individual existence. It is a sacred duty of man to worship these superior beings by invocations and sacrificial observances, as it is to honor the pitris (the fathers), the spirits of the departed ancestors.

Turiya: In early Hindu philosophy, turiya (also called caturtha) is a state of pure consciousness, or the experience of ultimate reality and truth. It is a fourth state of consciousness that underlies and at the same time transcends three common states of

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consciousness: (i) the state of waking consciousness (jagrata), (ii) the state of dreaming (svapna), (iii) and dreamless sleep (*susupti*).

Advaita Concept: The first two states are defective as experiences of reality and truth because of their flawed dualistic natures of subject and object, self and not-self, ego and non-ego. In the third state, dreamless sleep, one is not conscious of external or internal objects. But that does not mean consciousness is not present there. It is like saying 'I don't see anything in darkness'. The recognition that I don't see anything is what I 'see'. So also in dreamless sleep, one is not conscious of anything and the very fact that this statement is true proves the existence of consciousness during deep sleep.

In other words consciousness is the constant factor in all the three states and it is unaffected by the presence or absence of objects. Consciousness itself does not require to be revealed by another consciousness. It is self-revealed. While everything is presented to consciousness and is revealed by it, consciousness itself is not presented to anything else. It is never an object in relation to another subject. It is that which underlies both subject and object. It is the fourth, the turiya, the brahman. The Mandukya Upanishad defines turiya as follows:

> *"The fourth state is not that which is conscious of the subjective, nor that which is conscious of the objective, nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is simple consciousness, nor that which is all-sentient mass, nor that which is all darkness. It is unseen, transcendent, the sole essence of the consciousness of self, the completion of the world."*

Four States of Consciousness: Turiya represents consciousness free from material influence. The idea is that consciousness, of which the atman is constituted, exists in our wakeful state of material experience, as it continues during sleep. In sleep we dream and experience the mental realm, whereas during our waking state the physical plane has more bearing on our lives.

Upon awakening from deep dreamless sleep one remembers existing in that condition. This is evidenced by the common expression, 'I slept well!' One cannot remember something one has no experience of. Thus in deep sleep when intelligence is transformed by tamo guna, the self continues to exist, as it does when intelligence is transformed by rajo guna during the dream condition and during the wakeful condition when intellect is transformed by sattva guna. The self is thus independent of the body and mind. If the physical and mental realms were to shut down, the self would continue to exist. This we know from our experience in deep sleep. Realizing this involves entering the turiya.

God as Turiya: Bhagavata Purana 11.15.16 describes Bhagavan with the words *turiyakhye* (the fourth), the meaning of which is found in the Bhagavad Gita 7.13:

> *tribhir guna-mayair bhavair ebhih sarvam idam jagat*
> *mohitam nabhijanati mam ebhyah param avyayam*

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"Deluded by the three [gunas], the whole world does not know Me, who am above them and inexhaustible."

Fifth State in Gaudiya Vedanta

The fourth dimension is the ground of our existence and the goal of all transcendentalists. For the Vedanta philosophers it is perceived variously, either as undifferentiated consciousness or a relationship with the divine. Regarding the latter, Gaudiya Vaishnava Theology concludes that love is greater than ourselves, and it is the greatest aspect of God, one that he himself is motivated by. For them, the nondual consciousness of Vedanta philosophy is realized when we know that we do not belong to ourselves, what to speak of anything belonging to us. If there is any time at which we can accurately say that something belongs to us, it is when, having given ourselves in love to God, we can say that "he is ours." Thus Gaudiya Vaishnavas are interested in *turyatitah gopala* (Lord Gopala beyond fourth dimension, Gopala-tapani Upanishad 2.96). This is the fifth dimension, in which one comes face to face with Gopala Krishna in Braj (Vraja Dhama), from adhoksaja to aprakrta, from God consciousness to Krishna consciousness. Jiva Gosvami elaborated on the turiya state in his Sandarbhas.

Guru-shishya Tradition

The guru-shishya tradition (also guru-shishya *parampara* or lineage) is a spiritual relationship found within traditional Hinduism which is centered around the transmission of teachings from a *guru*. The term *shishya* roughly equates to the western term *disciple*, and in some parts of India is synonymous with the term *chela*. In a Hindu context, the term *guru* signifies one who teaches or imparts knowledge. Such knowledge, whether it be Vedic, Agamic art, architecture, music or spirituality, is imparted through the developing relationship between guru and disciple. The principle of this relationship is that knowledge, especially subtle or advanced knowledge, is best conveyed through a strong human relationship based on ideals of the student's respect, commitment, devotion and obedience, and on personal instruction by which the student eventually masters the knowledge that the guru embodies.

The guru-shishya relationship is a practice which has evolved into a fundamental component of Hinduism, since the beginning of the oral traditions of the Upanishads (c. 2000 BC). The term Upanishad derives from the Sanskrit words *upa* (near), *ni* (down) and sad (to sit) — "sitting down near" a spiritual teacher to receive instruction in the guru-shishya tradition. An example of this dynamic can be found embodied in the relationship between Krishna and Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita portion of the Mahabharata, and between Rama and Hanuman in the Ramayana. In the Upanishads, gurus and shishya appear in a variety of settings (husband answering questions about immortality, a teenage boy being taught by Yama, or Death personified, etc.). Sometimes the sages are women and at times the instructions (or rather inspiration) are sought by kings.

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In the Vedas, the *brahmavidya* or knowledge of Brahman is communicated from guru to shishya by word of mouth, bringing about the traditional guru-shishya *parampara*, or lineage. The word Sikh is derived from the Sanskrit word shishya.

Common Characteristics of theGuru-shishya Relationship: Within the broad spectrum of the Hindu religion, the guru-shishya relationship can be found in numerous variant forms including Tantra. Some common elements in this relationship include:

- The establishment of a spiritual teacher/student relationship between the guru and shishya.
- A formal recognition of this relationship, which usually assumes the form of a somewhat structured initiation ceremony. In this process the guru both accepts the initiate as a shishya, and also agrees to assume some level of responsibility for the spiritual well-being and progress of the new shishya. During this initiation process a meditation mantra is often taught to the new shishya.
- Sometimes this initiation process will also include the teaching of other esoteric wisdom and/or meditation techniques.
- Gurudakshina-The *shishya* giving a valuable to the *guru* as a token of gratitude, often, apart from his services, the only monetary or otherwise fees that the student gives. Such tokens can be as simple as a fruit to as serious as a thumb as given by *Ekalavya* to his *guru Dronacharya*.

Guru-shishya Relationship Types: Amongst Guru-shishya relationships, there is a certain range of variation of the levels of authority that may be attributed to the guru. This level of authority ranges from the highest levels of authority as most often found in bhakti yoga, such as the Sathya Sai Baba movement, to the lowest levels, as found in the Pranayama forms of yoga such as in the Sankara Saranam movement. Between these two ends of the spectrum there are innumerable variations in degree and form of that authority.

Advaita Vedanta: Advaita vednta requires anyone seeking to study advaita vedanta to do so from a Guru (*teacher*). The Guru must have the following qualities (see Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12):

1. Srotriya — must be learned in the Vedic scriptures and sampradaya
2. Brahmaniṗha — literally meaning *established in Brahman*; must have *realised* the oneness of Brahman in everything and in himself

The seeker must serve the Guru and submit questions with all humility in order to remove all doubts (see Bhagavad Gita 4.34). By doing so, advaita says, the seeker will attain moksha (*liberation from the cycle of births and deaths*).

Sruti Tradition

The Guru-shishya tradition plays an important part in the continuation of the Shruti tradition in Vaidika dharma. The Hindus believe that Vedas are handed down through

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the ages from Guru to shishya. The Vedas prescribe for a young brahmachari to be sent to a Gurukul where the Guru (referred to also as acharya) teaches the pupil the Vedas as also the Vedangas. The pupil is also taught the prayoga to perform yajnas. The term of stay varies (Manu Smriti says the term may be 12 years, 36 years or 48 years). After the stay at the Gurukul the brahmachari returns home after performing a ceremony called samavartana. The word Srauta is derived from the word Sruti meaning that which is heard. The Srauta tradition of handing the Vedas down the generations consisted in solely of oral tradition from Guru (teacher) to the Sishya (student). But of late many Vedic scholars make use of books in order to teach the Vedas to their students.

Bhakti Yoga

The most well known form of the Guru-shishya relationships is the bhakti guru-shishya relationship. Bhakti (Sanskrit) "Devotion" means surrender to God, gods or guru (sanskrit *guru bhakti* = devotion to the teacher). Bhakti extends from the simplest expression of devotion to the ego-decimating principle of prapati, which is total surrender. The bhakti form of the guru-shishya relationship generally incorporates three primary beliefs or practices:

1. Devotion to the guru as a divine figure or avatar
2. The belief that such a guru has transmitted, or will eventually impart moksha, diksha or shaktipat to the (successful) shishya
3. The belief that if the shishya's act of focusing his or her devotion (bhakti) upon the guru is sufficiently strong and worthy, then some form of spiritual merit will be gained by the shishya

Within the bhakti form of the guru-shishya relationship, a certain type of fixed dependency sometimes develops between the guru and the shishya, that may in some ways be similar to the relationship between a parent and a child.

Prapati: In the ego-decimating principle of prapati (Sanskrit, "Throwing oneself down"), the level of the submission of the will of the shishya to the will of the guru is sometimes extreme. It is one of total, unconditional submission to God or guru, often coupled with the attitude of personal helplessness, self-effacement and resignation. This doctrine is perhaps best expressed in the teachings of the four Samayacharya saints, who all shared a profound and mystical love of Siva that included:

- Deep humility and self-effacement, admission of sin and weakness
- Total surrender in God as the only true refuge and
- A relationship of lover and beloved known as bridal mysticism, in which the devotee is the bride and Siva the bridegroom

In its most extreme form it sometimes includes:

- The assignment of all or many of the material possessions of the shishya to the guru

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- The strict and unconditional adherence by the shishya to all of the commands of the guru. An example is the legend that *Karna* silently bore the pain of a wasp drilling into his flesh on the thigh so as not to disturb his *guru Parashurama*.
- A system of various titles of implied superiority or deification which the guru assumes, and often requires the shishya to use whenever addressing the guru
- The requirement that the shishya engage in various forms of physical demonstrations of affection towards the guru, such as bowing, kissing the hands or feet of the guru, and sometimes agreeing to various physical punishments as may sometimes be ordered by the guru
- Sometimes the authority of the guru will extend to all aspects of the shishya's life, including sexuality, livelihood, social life, etc.

In exchange for such absolute submission to the direction of the guru, the shishya usually expects the guru to provide the spiritual guidance necessary for the shishya to achieve some sort of meaningful spiritual progress. Often a guru will assert that he or she is capable of leading a shishya directly to the highest possible state of spirituality or consciousness, sometimes referred to within Hinduism as moksha. In the bhakti guru-shishya relationship the guru is often believed to have supernatural powers, which would be consistent with the deification of the guru that is usually a part of this relationship.

Other: Even though bhakti yoga has traditionally been practiced by the large majority of Hindus, a small minority spiritual teachers have for some time advocated non-bhakti forms of the guru-shishya relationship. Amongst these is Lahiri Mahasaya who refused many of the popular devotions proffered to him by those who wished to *deify* him, and who retained his regular job as a clerk, living as a regular householder, meanwhile being acclaimed as a great spiritual teacher by many of his shishyas. Lahiri also refused to allow his shishyas to organize any kind of a religious institution centered upon himself. Also amongst these is Sankara Saranam, a former shishya of Paramhansa Yogananda. Saranam insists that the guru may only act as a teacher that is more akin to a common academic teacher. As such, it is only the shishya who can accomplish his or her own spiritual advancement via his or her own learned ability to look within. As such, just as within academics, it is ultimately only the student who can actually advance him or herself by his or her own efforts, while such advancement is merely enhanced by the fertile learning environment that is created by the worthy teachings and insightful observations provided by a suitable guru.

Some elements that are common to most non-bhakti guru-shishya relationships are:

1. The guru is self-supporting, and does not accept supporting donations from shishyas
2. The guru is unwilling to assume responsibility for, or give specific advice regarding the life decisions of the shishya
3. The guru insists on a fundamental equality with his or her shishyas, and refuses to accept any honorific titles from his or her shishyas

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Buddhism: In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, the teacher is a valued and honoured mentor worthy of great respect and a source of inspiration on the path to Enlightenment. In the Tibetan tradition, however, the teacher is viewed as the very root of spiritual realization and the basis of the entire path. Without the teacher, it is asserted, there can be no experience and insight. The guru is to be seen as Buddha. In Tibetan texts, great emphasis is placed upon praising the virtues of the guru. Tantric teachings include generating visualisations of the guru and making offerings praising the guru. The guru becomes known as the *vajra* (literally "diamond") guru, the one who is the source of initiation into the tantric deity. The disciple is asked to enter into a series of vows and commitments that ensure the maintenance of the spiritual link with the understanding that to break this link is a serious downfall.

Psychological Aspects: Rob Preece, in *The Noble Imperfection*, writes that while the teacher/disciple relationship can be an invaluable and fruitful experience, the process of relating to spiritual teachers also has its hazards. These are the result of naivete amongst Westerners as to the nature of the guru/devotee relationship and the consequence of a lack of understanding on the part of Eastern teachers as to the nature of Western psychological makeup. Preece introduces the notion of transference to explain the manner in which the guru/disciple relationship develops from a more Western psychological perspective. He writes: "In its simplest sense transference occurs when unconsciously a person endows another with an attribute that actually is projected from within themselves." In developing this concept, Preece writes that when we transfer an inner quality onto another person we may be giving that person a power over us as a consequence of the projection, carrying the potential for great insight and inspiration, but also the potential for great danger. "In giving this power over to someone else they have a certain hold and influence over us it is hard to resist, while we become enthralled or spellbound by the power of the archetype".

Ritual

A ritual is a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value, which is prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of a community. A ritual may be performed at regular intervals, or on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals or communities. It may be performed by a single individual, by a group, or by the entire community; in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it; either in public, in private, or before specific people. A ritual may be restricted to a certain subset of the community, and may enable or underscore the passage between religious or social states.

The purposes of rituals are varied; they include compliance with religious obligations or ideals, satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, demonstration of respect or submission, stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event — or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.

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Rituals of various kinds are a feature of almost all known human societies, past or present. They include not only the various worship rites and sacraments of organized cults and religions, but also the rites of passage of certain societies, oaths of allegiance, coronations, and presidential inaugurations, marriages and funerals, school "rush" traditions and graduations, club meetings, sports events, halloween parties and veteran parades, Christmas shopping, and more. Many activities that are ostensibly performed for concrete purposes, such as jury trials, execution of criminals, and scientific symposia, are loaded with purely symbolic actions prescribed by regulations or tradition, and thus partly ritual in nature. Even trivial actions like hand-shaking and saying hello are rituals. In any case, an essential feature of a ritual is that the actions and their symbolism are not arbitrarily chosen by the performers, nor dictated by logic or necessity, but are, at least in part, prescribed and imposed upon the performers by some external source.

Ritual Actions: Because of their symbolic nature, there are hardly any limits to the kind of actions that may be incorporated in a ritual. The rites of past and present societies have typically involved special gestures and words, recitation of fixed texts, performance of special music, songs or dances, processions, manipulation of certain objects, use of special dresses, consumption of special food, drink, or drugs, and much more. Religious rituals have also included animal sacrifice, human sacrifice or ritual suicide, and other forms of ritual murder.

Purposes: Ritual serves diverse purposes including:

- Worship
- Ritual purification with the aim of removing uncleanliness, which may be real or symbolic.
- Atonement
- Dedication

Religious Ritual: In religion, a ritual can comprise the prescribed outward forms of performing, the *cults* or cult of a particular observation within a religion or religious denomination. Although ritual is often used in context with worship performed in a church, the actual relationship between any religion's doctrine and its ritual(s) can vary considerably from organized religion to non-institutionalized spirituality, such as ayahuasca shamanism as practiced by the Urarina of the upper Amazon. Rituals often have a close connection with reverence, thus a ritual in many cases expresses reverence for a deity or idealized state of humanity.

Sociology

Outside worship and reverence, rituals can have a more basic sociological function in expressing, fixing and reinforcing the shared values and beliefs of a society. Ritual thus is as much political as religious in orientation. Rituals have formed a part of human culture for tens of thousands of years. The earliest known evidence of burial rituals dates

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from around 20,000 years ago. (Older skeletons show no signs of deliberate 'burial', and as such lack clear evidence of the materialization of ritual.)

Rituals can aid in creating a firm sense of group identity. Humans have used rituals to create a social bond and alleviate the isolation that can be felt otherwise.

Fraternal: Nearly all fraternities and sororities have secret rituals incorporated into their structure. Many were founded in college and university societies resistant to the idea of a fraternal organization. Thus, numerous aspects of ritual and ritualistic proceedings are ingrained into the workings of the societies.

Psychology

In psychology, the term *ritual* sometimes refers to a specific action or series of actions that a person performs in a given context which otherwise has no apparent reason or purpose. The term may refer especially to compulsive behaviors of people afflicted with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

Jyotisha

Jyotisha (*jyotica*, in Hindi and English usage Jyotish) is the Hindu system of astrology, one of the six disciplines of Vedanga. The Sanskrit word derives from *jyótis* (disjointed as "Ja"+"Ya"+"O"+"T"+"ish" to get the root meaning as "water or birth" + in addition to" + "earth" and "stars" + "knowledgeable" equating as one who is knowledgeable, or enlightened with knowledge, of birth, fate, and relationship to water, earth and stars) or which means "light, brightness", but in the plural also "the heavenly bodies, planets and stars". *Jyotish* may thus at one level be seen to signify a "science of heavenly bodies". However, as the singular purpose of jyotish and the vedas is to dispel the darkness of ignorance, it is more commonly taken to signify the "science of light". Indeed, Jyotish has historically been part of a continuous "holistic" approach to living and to spiritual practice within the life of Hindus predominant in India.

Jyotish is often discussed as the instructional element of the Rig Veda, and as such is a Vedanga, or "body part" of the Vedas. Jyotish is called the *Eye of the Veda*, for its believed ability to view both phenomenal reality and wisdom itself. Part of a larger Vedic curriculum including mathematics, architecture, medical and military applications, it superficially has much in common with ancient and modern Western astrology (and the early traces of the descent of various schools of astrology from the Harappan and Egyptian cultures, Chinese and the Chaldean, through the Arabs, Greeks, and early Romans show complex interweavings that are assessed variously by diverse camps of scholars — who, however, currently find little common ground as to the exact historical development). Jyotish has many facets, and some of its basics are clearly also cornerstones of Western astrology, such as symbolically endowed signs, houses and planets. But Jyotish has its own sophisticated reference to the nominal: the planets are "grahas", forces that seize or act upon created beings and influence their actions and life.

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As Hindus believe that humans have ups and downs in life because of karma, many use Jyotish to understand the downs in life due to the influence of planets, *i.e.*, Navagraha and perform religious ceremonies to mitigate the bad karma.

Foundations: Jyotish's many lineages or paramparas emphasize that its study is a sadhana or technique of mental and existential development. In modern times it is a chief source of reference for many Hindus and other spiritual practitioners. In addition to sustaining its own lore, commentary and debates on the dilemmas of fate and free will and the philosophy of karma, jyotish maintains a virtual *materia medica* of remedies for difficulties found in horoscopes. Vedic astrologers will frequently prescribe special stones, or specific therapeutic practices or meditation techniques using mantras to those facing difficult or unclear futures as predicted by means consistent with Jyotish methodology. In past centuries, Brahmins have been the primary practitioners of Jyotish. In the last century, a renaissance of study of Jyotish and other Vedic sciences emerged in India and the west.

The foundation of jyotish is the notion of bandhu of the Vedas, which is the connection between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Surya, the Sun, is a manifestation of Vishnu, a central aspect of the Supreme, and is also the Atman within man. The term "Vedic astrology" has been recently introduced by American and Western astrologers in the 1980s and 1990s, leading to collaborative organizations such as the now-international Council of Vedic Astrology.

Jyotish is still commonly used to aid in important decisions in modern India. In Hindu culture, newborns are traditionally named based on their jyotish charts, and jyotish concepts are pervasive in the organization of the calendar and holidays as well as in many areas of life and science. Astrology is vital to decisions made about marriage, opening a new business, and moving into a new home.

Branches of Vedic/Hindu Astrology

Vedic astrology (*Aagam Shaastra / Jyotisha*-futurity sciences) has three main branches:

- *Siddhanta (Astronomy):* Astronomy & its application to astrology
- *Samhita (Mundane astrology):* Covers Mundane astrology, predicting important events related to countries such as war, earth quakes, political events, astro-meteorology, financial positions, electional astrology; house & construction related matters (Vaastu Shaastra), animals, portents & omens etc.

Hora (Predictive Astrology): This branch has the following different styles/ subbranches:

- *Jaatak Shaastra*/Hora Shaastra (Natal Astrology/horoscopy): Prediction based on individual horoscope.
- *Muhurt or Muhurtha* (Electional astrology): Selection of beneficial time to initiate an activity to get maximum fruition from the life activities.

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- *Swar Shaastra* (Phonetical astrology): Predictions based on name & sounds.
- *Prashna* (Horary astrology): Predictions based on time when a question is asked by querent / querist.
- *Ankjyotisha / Kabala* (Numerology): A branch of astrology based on numbers.
- *Nadi* Astrology: An ancient treatise having detailed predictions for individuals.
- *Tajik Shaastra / Varsha Phal* (Annual Horoscopy): Astrology based on annual solar returns.
- *Jaimini Sutras*: A non-conventional method of timing of events based on Famous Indian astrologer, Acharya Jaimini.
- *Nastjaatakam* (Lost Horoscopy): Art of tracing / construction of lost horoscopes.
- *Streejaatak* (female astrology): A special branch of astrology dealing with female nativities.

Other Related Branches

- *Graha Samudriki* (Astro-Palmistry): Palm reading as horoscope.
- *Hasta Rekha / Samudrika Shaastra* (Palmistry): Based on palm reading.
- *Padatal Shaastra* (Plantarology): Based on reading of lines & signs on the sole.
- *Shakun Shaastra* (Omens): Predictions based on omens & portents.
- *Swapna Vidhya* : Interpretation of dreams.
- *Kapal Vidya* (Phrenology)
- *Aakriti Vidya* (Physiognomy): Based on structure & moles on the body.
- *Kerala Jyotisha*: Predictions based on querrist reply regarding name of flower or colour or touching part of body.
- Remedial Astrology: Various modes of propitiation of planets based on planetary positions in nativity, transits, elections & for religious functions.

In Vedic literature guidance is given on two other branches viz, Electional astrology & Remedial astrology.

Hindu and Western Astrology

The most easily referred to difference between the two lies in the method of measurement of the Zodiac. Vedic astrology uses primarily the sidereal zodiac (in which stars are considered to be the fixed background against which the motion of the planets is measured), whereas most Western astrology uses the tropical zodiac (the motion of the planets is measured against the position of the Sun on the Spring equinox). This difference becomes only noticeable over time, after the course of several centuries, as a result of the precession of the equinoxes. Synchronously, the two systems are identical, with just a shift of the origin of the ecliptic longitude by about 22 degrees or days, resulting on the placement of planets in the previous sign in Western charts about 80% of the time.

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Both Jyotish and Western traditions have existed for millennia. Vedic astrology includes several nuanced sub-systems of interpretation and prediction incorporating unique sacralized elements not found elsewhere, such as its specific system of lunar mansions (called *nakshatras*, encompassing a pantheon of archetypal deities). The nakshatras are used to pick auspicious times of day or month for every human activity as well as to provide insight into the motivations and guiding characteristics of humans and events coming under their influence. Nakshatra cycles, or dashas, are developing a reputation in contemporary culture for the accuracy with which they time events.

A further unique concept in jyotish rarely seen in Western astrology is the concept of Dashas-a mathematical analyses that breaks down human or the subject's lifetime into various sub-periods based on the location of Moon at birth. Predictions in jyotish incorporate various elements around the birth chart-influences of transits (similar to Western Astrology though more focused on houses or bhavas) as well as Dashas.

Modern Approaches to Jyotisha

Vedic astrology includes a number of techniques and approaches that have accumulated over the eons with little consensus on what gives consistently accurate results. This collection of techniques and approaches is sometimes referred to as Classical or Traditional Jyotish. However, the march towards new insights and applications continues in the modern epoch, as in earlier times, with the objective as ever to achieve more precise analysis and accurate predictions. In the 1960s, H.R. Seshadri Iyer, introduced a system including the yoga point, which has become popular in also the West. In the early 1990s, V.K. Choudhry introduced the Systems' Approach for Interpreting Horoscopes, a simplified system of Jyotish.

Fundamentals of Jyotisha: Jyotish is based on what Western astrologers call the whole sign house system and recognizes nine grahas (heavenly bodies or "planets"):

Abbreviation	*Sanskrit Name*	*English Name*	*Represents*
Sy or Su	Surya	Sun	Soul
Ch or Mo	Chandra	Moon	Mind
Ma	Mangala or Angaraka or Kuja	Mars	energetic action, confidence and ego
Bu or Me	Budha	Mercury	Communication
Gu or Ju	Guru or Brihaspati	Jupiter	the great teacher
Sk or Ve	Sukra	Venus	wealth, pleasure and reproduction
Sa	Sanaiscarya, Shani, or Sani	Saturn	learning *the hard way*.
Ra	Rahu	Ascending	often described as a demon who does his best to plunge any area of one's life he controls into chaos
Ke	Ketu	Descending	supernatural influences

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One's Ascendant, or *lagna*, the rashi which is rising on the eastern horizon at the time of one's birth, is the most influential and important one. Of lesser importance but still some impact is the Janma Rashi, the rashi in which the moon lay while one was born.

There are three different Jyotish chart notations, which are functionally equivalent but quite different in appearance. The following images show the same birth chart in the two main notations-North Indian and South Indian. The third notation is followed in Eastern parts of India.

In the North Indian notation, the house positions are fixed (1st house top middle, with the rest following in counterclockwise order) and the signs of the zodiac are indicated by numbers in the chart (1 for Aries, and so on). Conversely, in the South Indian notation, the signs of the zodiac have fixed positions (Aries always occupies the 2nd box from the left in the top row, with the rest following in clockwise order), and the first house is marked "As" (for ascendant) with the rest following in clockwise order.

The charts are broken into twelve sections, houses or Bhavas, each of which is related to a rashi in an equal house system.

Vedic or Hindu astrology provides detailed guidance as to which activity fructify on specific weekdays. In Hindu system, a weekday starts from the local Sunrise & ends at the following Sunrise, which is distinct from the Gorgian calendar in which a weekday along with date starts at expiry of 1200 a.m. of the Zonal Standard Time. Seven days a week system is prevalent throughout the world. Weekdays are given due importance in selection of election as the desired work which easily gets fructified (*Siddhi*) when its day lord is strong, the same work does not get fructified when day lord is weak / powerless, even after extra efforts & facing of discomforts. To fortify election, a strong day lord (planet) should be properly placed in the election chart.

Based on nature & signification of the weekday, day lord (ruling planet), tutelary lord and other electional considerations following works (& works related to the mentioned items) are recommended for conduction & initiation in different weekdays. It is opined that on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday all types of works fructify; while on Sunday, Tuesday & Saturday only prescribed activities fructify. Here is the list of works which aspirants should do on different weekdays.

SUNDAY: Coronation, service to the government / king, worship, fire, fire related works, weapon making & usage, war, bravery, service & employment, travel, thief, doctor, transaction of medicine, purchase of cows, bullocks & animals, gold-silver-copper-wood-works, bones-skin-hides, auspicious (*Manglik*) works, Yagya, teaching Mantras (Agni Mantras), religious discourse, music learning, woolen clothes, wearing of new clothes, mountain, stones, dessert, forest, trees, usage of forest items, snake, animal rearing & husbandry, food grain, trade.

MONDAY: Agriculture, farming, gardening, fragrant trees, lotus & flowers, milk, food, food-grains, sugar, sugarcane, raw sugar / molasses, Yagya, ornament making &

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wearing, silver, deer, sale & purchase of cows-buffaloes, gems-pearl & shells, conch-shell, singing & dancing-starting thereof, water related works, popular works, movable works, starting of education, night movements, benefit to mother's brother, Brahmins, article causing phlegm, clothes, female related works, king, road.

TUESDAY: Killing, arresting, inciting insurgency, cruel works, piercing, army commanding, treaty, backing off treaty / agreement, fort, igniting fire, weapon, storing of war material, poison, lying, deception, thief, thievery, coral, gold related works & collection thereof, metal work, forest, night worker, doctor, ascetic / religious mendicant, treasurer, business of catching snakes, animal, trees with red coloured flowers, red colour items, works related to blood.

WEDNESDAY: Fine arts, literature-music-dancing & starting thereof; poetry, sculpturing, all type of art, theater, education, writing, learning of Vedas, idol making, Mantra Kriya, meritorious works, marriage, friendship, starting of fast, holy bathing, trade, clever works, ordinary works, science, metal work, war, argument, intelligence, skill, ingenuity, messenger, physical exercise, collection of articles, juices & food grains, green sapphire, earth, clothes, fragrant articles, works which end fast-works which take long time – works which finish in the middle.

THURSDAY : Auspicious (*Manglik*) works, Yagya, Havan, worshipping, peaceful religious works, fast, oblation to the dead (*Pitri Sharadh*) , temple, installing of idol, Alankaar, education, knowledge related works, learning in general, *Shaastras*, truthful works, wearing new clothes & trading thereof, ornaments, starting living in house, doctor, medicine, trading in medicine, physical works, health related works, physical works, development & expanding works, king, wealth, trees, gold, silver, elephant, horse, bullock, transport, travel.

FRIDAY: Good for starting dance, music, singing painting; luxurious works, festivals, wearing new clothes & ornaments, friendship, worshipping sex God (*Kamdev*), females, passionate women, sex, passion, prostitutes, beds, increase in semen, fragrance, comedy, laughter, cows, trade related to food grain & agriculture, farming, selling & purchase of land, sugar cane, juicy foods, gems, gold, silver, coffer, transport, lotus, earth, medicine.

SATURDAY : Entering into new house & city, trading with deceit & forgery, telling lies, dreadful deeds, insurgency, works related to obstruction, trading of arms & ammunition, poisoning, bereft of courtesy, usage of iron & steel, arm & armory, dead, servant, debased person, old persons, thief, buffalo, camel, birds, trapping of elephant, stable works, profession related to capturing, collection of houses, departure, broken utensils, glass, stones, learning secret Mantras from Guru (Deeksha), service. According to Sage Narad, Acharya Garga, Ramdeen, & host of other exponents it is opined that it is beneficial & augurs fortunate effects to initiate & conduct works related to iron on Saturdays. With this the learned readers may help remove doubts / superstition in certain parts of the country that purchase or sale of iron items, & doing works related to iron (steel) on Saturdays is inauspicious.

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Logics for Selection of Weekdays

Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus & Saturn in order are the rulers of the weekdays. Depending upon the inherent natures of the ruling planets, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday are auspicious, benefic & good days; while Sunday, Tuesday & Saturday in general are malefic & cruel days. Tuesday & Saturday are maximum malefic, while Sunday is partially malefic. Auspicious & Manglik works are done on benefic days; while cruel, sinful (*Paap Karamas*), unethical works in general; & the specified works are done on Saturday, Tuesday & Sunday. Some benefic works also fructify on malefic days depending upon the nature of the work & special dictums regarding election (Muhurt). There is no very tight demarcation of the allocated works for the weekdays, and the day is selected based on the type of work, planet signifying the work, time of starting & host of other factors related to the weekday.

Nature of Sunday is fixed / stationary; of Monday is movable; of Tuesday is cruel; of Wednesday is mixed / ordinary; of Thursday is small / short; of Friday is sweet; & of Saturday is sharp / horrible. When constellation (occupied by the Moon) & day lord are of same nature then, the combined efficacy increases many folds – like when asterisms of Rohini & 3 Uttras coincide on a Sunday; fixed / stationary types of works fructify.

Thursday, Friday & Sunday are effective during daytime; Monday, Tuesday & Saturday are effective during night-time while Mercury is effective both during daytime & night-time. Malefic effect of Sunday, Tuesday & Saturday does not exist after mid-day. Some opine that "Vaar Dosha" (evil effects of weekday) does not prevail during night.

Colour of the work: Consistent with the colour of the ruling planet of the day, it is beneficial to conduct work with that colour on the weekday ruled by the planet. The Sun's colour is red mixed with black or blood red; Moon's-white; Mars'-pale red; Mercury's-grass green; Jupiter's-yellow; Venus's-swarthy (dark skin) & Saturn's-black. Wearing of the clothes of the above stated colours during planets' weekdays is beneficial to the user. Aspirant may also use colours ruled by the rulers of the weekdays. Some opine that, copper-red, white, ultra red, blue, ultra yellow, variegated (mixed, spotted) & black are the colours ruled by the planets from the Sun to Saturn.

Like for election of white washing / painting of a house certain criteria have been laid down. Meeting those requirements, the colour of the white washing / painting if done in yellow on Thursday or in green shade on Wednesday, enhances the beneficence. Similar guidance is taken in respect of other usages of the colours. Saturday is not recommended to sow seeds, but is considered fruitful to sow seeds of black grains, more profitable if Saturn is in the rising sign.

Treatises on Nativity:

- Skanda Hora or Jyotishmati(God Brahma)
- Brihat Prajapatya (Daksha Prajapati)

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- Vasishta Hora (Sage Vasishta)
- Garga Hora (Sage Garga)
- Kousika Hora (Sage Viswamitra)
- Sounaka Hora (Sage Sounaka)
- Brihat Parasara Hora Sastram (Sage Parasara)
- Jaimini Sutram (Sage Jaimini)
- Brigu Sutram (Sage Brigu)
- Vedanga Jyotish (Lagadha)
- Yavaneswara Hora or Yavanajataka (Sage Yavaneswara)
- Sphujudwaja Hora (King Sphujidwaja)
- MeenarajaHora or Vridha Yavana Hora (King Meenaraja)
- Saravali (Kalyana Verma)
- Brihat Jatakam (Varahamihira)
- Phala deepika (Mantreswara)
- Hora Saram (Prithu Yasas)
- Sarvartha Chintamani (Venkatesa Daivajna)
- Hora Ratna (Acharya Balabhadra)
- Jataka Parijatam (Vaidyanatha Deekshita)
- Chatkara Chintamani
- Kashyapa Hora
- Poorva Kalamritam (Ganaka Kalidasa)
- Uttara Kalamritam (Ganaka Kalidasa)
- Suka Nadi
- Deva Keralam or Chandra Kala Nadi (Achyuta)
- Tajaka Neelakanthi (Neelakantha)
- Pranasanushata Padhati
- Prasna Ratna
- Prasna Margam (Panakkattu Sankaran Nambootiri Brahmin)
- Daivajna Vallabha (Varahamihira)
- Kaalaprakashika

Treatises on Hindu Electional Astrology

- Adbhuta Sagaar
- Brihannarad
- Brihatdaivygyaranjan
- Brihatjyotisaar

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- Daivygyamanoranjan Daivygyamanohar Granth
- Ganak Mandan
- Gian Manjari
- Hindu Electional Astrology (V K Shridhar)
- Jaganmohan Granth
- Jyotiprakash
- Jyotirnibandh
- Jyotish Ratan
- Jyotishsaar
- Jyotish Chintamani
- Jyotirvidabharnam
- Kaal Khanda
- Kaal Nirnaya Deepika
- Kaal Prakashika
- Madhaveeyam
- Muhurtarnava
- Muhurt Bhaskar
- Muhurt Chintamani (Daivygya Ram)
- Muhurt Chudamani
- Muhurt Darpaan
- Muhurt Deepak
- Muhurt Deepika
- Muhurt Ganpati
- Muhurt Kalpadrum
- Muhurt Maala
- Muhurt Manjari
- Muhurt Martanda
- Muhurt Muktaavali
- Muhurt Prakash
- Muhurt Padavi
- Muhurt Saagar
- Muhurt Sangraha
- Muhurt Tattva
- Muhurt Tattvapradeep
- Muhurtarnava

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- Muktaavali
- Narpatijacharyaaswarodaya
- Naardeeya
- Nibandh Chudamani
- Poorva Kaalamrit
- Rajmartanda
- Ratan Koosh
- Ratanmaala
- Samarsaar
- Shiv Swarodaya
- Vaivahaar Pradeep
- Vivah Kautuhal
- Vivah Patal
- Vivah Pradeep
- Vivah Saar
- Vivah Vrindavan
- Vyvahaarochchya
- Yoga Yatra
- Vyvaharsaar
- *Samhitas : treatises on mundane, portents, omens, meteorology etc.*
- Brahmarshi Samhita
- Brihaspati Samhita
- Brihat Samhita
- Parasara Samhita
- Garga Samhita
- Rishiputra Samhita
- Guru Samhita
- Kashyap Samhita
- Lomasha Samhita
- Maanav Samhita
- Naagarjun Samhita
- Narad Samhita
- Shakalya Samhita
- Samaas Samhita
- Samhita Pradeep

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- Samhita Sidhhanta
- Satya Samhita
- Sur Samhita
- Vaikhaan Samhita
- Vasist Samhita
- *Siddhanta : Astronomy and Mathematics and its application to astrology.*
- Ancient Surya Sidhata (Maya)
- Brahma Sidhanta (God Brahma)
- Lomasa Sidhanta (Sage Lomasa)
- Poulisa Sidhanta (Sage Poulisa)
- Pitamaha Sidhanta (God Brahma)
- Vasishta Sidhata (Sage Vasishta)
- Vridha Vasishta Sidhanta (Sage Vridha Vasishta)
- Garga Sidhanta (Sage Garga)
- Parasara Sidhanta (Sage Parasara)
- Pancha Sidhantika (Varaha Mihira)
- Modern Surya Sidhanta (Aryabhata II)

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3

END OF VEDAS AND PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

The Vedanta philosophy is drawn from the Vedas, which are the traditional Hindu scriptures. The Vedas are a diverse collection of Sanskrit writings extending back several thousand years, concerned with the knowledge of spiritual reality. The root word, "Ved," means to know in the mystical sense: to know spiritual truth. The suffix "anta" means "end" in the sense of termination and, secondly, of purpose. The end of the Vedas is the philosophical section, the "Vedanta," the portion known as the Upanishads.

The Upanishads are part of the Vedas as the New Testament is part of the Bible. They not only occur at the end of the Vedas, but are the culmination towards which the Vedas move. The Upanishadic texts are unique in their endless emphasis on the central Vedantic discovery: The Supreme Being is the Self and *your* self is *that* Self.

Vedanta's basic principles are:

(1) Nothing exists except the Divine Being, or *Brahman*. It pervades, supports, determines, and explains everything. It is called the One. The doctrine of the Spiritual Oneness of Existence follows from this.

(2) The very nature of the Soul is Divine: the Cosmic Self becomes the individual Self.

(3) The goal of the individual, then, is to realize his/her true nature, which is Divine.

(4) The Universality of religious truth: there are many ways to realize God. (Prophets differ in their interpretation of religion as to details, but not in the essentials.)

Vedanta is a scientific approach to religion and religious truth. There is no one individual associated with the origin of Vedantic philosophy, upon which Hinduism is based. Every other creed was founded by an individual. Not Hinduism. Only principles at the beginning; Truth and Universal laws discovered and passed on by the ancient Vedic sages. The main Vedantic texts are: the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita,* and the *Brahma*

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Sutras. The Vedanta philosophy is also readily found in the teachings of Buddha, Shankara, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. It is open ended, a vast cathedral of thought encompassing both the personal and impersonal approaches to divine realization.

Each religion thinks it has the truth, and therefore is superior to others. Every religion differs from others, and wherein they differ is not Vedanta, but rather wherein they are alike. Vedanta becomes self evident when any given religion acts in a universal manner, pleasing everyone. If each religion was deprived of those elements in its creed and practice that separate it from other religions, then what remains that is Vedanta. For example: all religions teach the perfection of self-sacrifice as the highest virtue. Vedanta takes its stand on this at the start. So all religions resemble one another in this respect. They stress the virtue of renunciation, service to others, relating to others as though to one's own self, as though we had in common the same life, the same destiny and the same self, which is a simple but adequate rendering of the prime truth of Vedanta.

Vedanta is without creed, dogma, ritual or doctrine. Vedanta is the mysticism of spirituality. It is what is left over when all the differences that separate religions have been eliminated. Therefore, it is the essence of religion, the truth embedded in the heart of every religion. Vedanta is the Godhead that makes every religion divine.

Vedanta is the chief means whereby each religion will have the incentive to practice tolerance and acceptance toward all other faiths. Every religion, every sect, thinks it has found the truth and it alone has found it. A universal disease!

Throughout history it is the same....To this day. Not only Christians, Jews, and Moslems, but Hindus, Buddhists, Sufis, etc.

How to break the hold of this compulsion?

Vedanta shows the way. It teaches that Truth is universal, that it is continually revealed, that the prophets keep coming, that the Truth may be known via many paths.. if followed faithfully, and spiritually.

One more golden virtue of the Vedanta philosophy: With the help of Vedanta we can practice our personal devotions, fervent in our faith and dedication, without feeling that we alone can reach the goal, and convinced quite convinced that others, too, may succeed, though on another path.

Vedanta is not a matter of belief but realization. We are not asked to believe but to realize. If there is a God, then we should be able to experience him.

Not faith alone, but function. Not belief, but behaviour.

Vedanta gives freedom to individuals to advance along their own line of development.

Shankaracharya is the most important teacher of the Advaita school of Vedanta, and his commentaries to the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita and the Brahmasutras define the parameters of *Advaita* thought. However, it must be remembered that all Vedanta philosophy really goes back to the Upanishads, and *Shankaracharya* is regarded as a pre-

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eminent teacher who continued the Upanishadic tradition. The name *Shankaracharya* has become a title for the heads of the numerous Advaita institutions in India today, because of the great respect and fame associated with it.

The philosophy of Advaita, literally non-dualism, is the premier and oldest extant among the Vedanta schools of Indian philosophy. The Upanishadic quest is to understand Brahman, the source of everything, the *Atman*, the Self, and the relationship between Brahman and *Atman*. The Upanishads explore these issues from different angles. The Advaita school teaches a complete essential identity between Brahman and *Atman*. In other vedantic traditions, the essential relationship between *Atman* and Brahman is understood in different ways.

The Advaita Vedanta has been classified into three sections, named *History*, *Philosophers* and *Philosophy*. The "History" section deals with Shankaracharya, the issues involved in reckoning his date, the living Advaita tradition and related topics. Pre-Shankaran Vedanta, Gaudapada, Shankaracharya, his disciples, Mandana Misra and post-Shankaran advaitins are discussed in appropriate pages under the "Philosophers" section. The "Philosophy" section starts with a brief introduction to various schools of Indian philosophy and the source texts of Vedanta, the Upanishads. Philosophical issues in Advaita Vedanta are examined in detail in this section. More pages on different aspects of Advaita Vedanta and its relation to other systems are under construction.

The Supreme Swan: In the background is an artistic rendering of a swan, with the Sanskrit sentence *Brahmaiva satyam*-Brahman is the only Truth. The swan motif is seen in the seals of many Advaita organizations. The figure seen here has been adapted from the official seal of the Sringeri Matha, an ancient and one of the most important centres of Advaita Vedanta in India. The swan is a very popular motif in traditional Hindu symbolism. It can be found in oil-lamps used in temples and at shrines in people's homes.

The swan has a special association with Advaita Vedanta. The swan is called *hamsa* in the sanskrit language. The greatest masters in the Advaita tradition are called *paramahamsas*-the great swans. The word *hamsa* is a variation of *so'ham*: I am He, which constitutes the highest realization. There are other equivalences between the swan and the advaitin, that make the swan a particularly apt symbol for Advaita Vedanta. The swan stays in water, but its feathers remain dry. Similarly, the advaitin lives in the world, yet strives to remain unaffected by life's ups and downs.

In India, the swan is also mythically credited with the ability to separate milk from water. Similarly, the advaitin discriminates the eternal *Atman* from the non-eternal world. The *Atman* that is Brahman is immanent in the world, just like milk is seemingly inseparably mixed with water, but it can never be truly realized without the *nitya-anitya-vastu viveka*-right discrimination between the eternal and ephemeral-that is essential for the advaitin. The swan is thus a symbol for the *Ivanmukta*, who is liberated while still alive in this world, by virtue of having realized Brahman.

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Vedanta is a school of philosophy within Hinduism. The word *Vedanta* is a compound of *veda* "knowledge" and *anta* "end, conclusion", translating to "the culmination of the *Vedas*". Vedanta is also called *Uttara Mimamsa*, or the 'latter' or 'higher enquiry', and is often paired with Purva Mimamsa, the 'former enquiry'. Purva Mimamsa, usually simply called Mimamsa, deals with explanations of the fire-sacrifices of the Vedic mantras (in the Samhita portion of the Vedas) and Brahmanas, while Vedanta explicates the esoteric teachings of the raryakas (the "forest scriptures"), and the Upanishads, composed from the 6th century BC until modern times.

History: While the traditional Vedic 'Karma kanda', or ritualistic components of religion, continued to be practiced through the Brahmins as meditative and propitiatory rites to guide society to self-knowledge, more Jnana-or knowledge-centered understandings began to emerge. These are mystical streams of Vedic religion that focused on meditation, self-discipline and spiritual connectivity rather than on rituals.

Etymologically, *veda* means "knowledge" and *anta* means "end", so the literal meaning of the term "Vednta" is "the end of knowledge" or "the ultimate knowledge" or "matter appended to the Veda". In earlier writings, Sanskrit 'Vedanta' simply referred to the Upanishads, the most speculative and philosophical of the Vedic texts. However, in the medieval period of Hinduism, the word Vedanta came to mean the school of philosophy that interpreted the Upanishads. Traditional Vedanta considers scriptural evidence, or shabda pramana, as the most authentic means of knowledge, while perception, or pratyakssa, and logical inference, or anumana, are considered to be subordinate (but valid).

Formalization: The systematization of Vedantic ideas into one coherent treatise was undertaken by Badarayana in the Vedanta Sutra, or Brahma Sutra. The cryptic aphorisms of the Vedanta Sutras are open to a variety of interpretations, resulting in the formation of numerous Vedanta schools, each interpreting the texts in its own way and producing its own sub-commentaries claiming to be faithful to the original. Consistent throughout Vedanta, however, is the exhortation that ritual be eschewed in favour of the individual's quest for truth through meditation governed by a loving morality, secure in the knowledge that infinite bliss awaits the seeker. Near all existing sects of Hinduism are directly or indirectly influenced by the thought systems developed by Vedantic thinkers. Hinduism to a great extent owes its survival to the formation of the coherent and logically advanced systems of Vedanta.

In Modern Times: Advaita Vedanta has influenced a number of modern scientists, philosophers and authors. Nikola Tesla was influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, who propounded Vedanta vigorously in the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many other Indian teachers followed in due course, including Yogananda and others who came to North America to preach Vedanta and related philosophies. Erwin Schrödinger claimed to have been inspired by Vedanta in his discovery of quantum theory. According to his biographer Walter Moore: "The unity and continuity of Vedanta are reflected in the unity and continuity of wave mechanics. In 1925, the world

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view of physics was a model of a great machine composed of separable interacting material particles. During the next few years, Schrödinger and Werner Heisenberg and their followers created a universe based on superimposed, inseparable waves of probability amplitudes. This new view would be entirely consistent with the Vedantic concept of All in One."

Fritjof Capra's book The Tao of Physics is one among several that pursues this viewpoint as it investigates the relationship between modern, particularly quantum, physics and the core philosophies of various Eastern religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Unfortunately, such writings by western authors often run the risk of oversimplifying and ignoring important differences between Eastern religions. For instance, pre-modern Vedantins argued for the existence of an eternal self, or *Atman*, while Buddhism denies it. However, in recent times, the availability of an increasing number of accurate translations of Vedantic works, commentaries by Western scientists like Schrodinger and Capra, and easier access to original texts have made it possible for modern students of Vedanta and physics to overcome the semantic gap arising due to cultural differences and approach their study in a more informed manner.

Among other prominent Western figures who have been influenced by and commented on Vedanta are Max Muller, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, Romain Rolland, Alan Watts, Eugene Wigner, Arnold Toynbee, and Will Durant.

Source Texts: All forms of Vedanta are drawn primarily from the Upanishads, a set of philosophical and instructive Vedic scriptures, which deal mainly with forms of meditation. "The Upanishads are commentaries on the Vedas, their putative end and essence, and thus known as Vedanta = 'End of the Veda'. They are considered the fundamental essence of all the Vedas and although they form the backbone of Vedanta, portions of Vedantic thought are also derived from some of the earlier Aranyakas.

The primary philosophy captured in the Upanishads, that of one absolute reality termed as Brahman is the main principle of Vedanta. The sage Badarayana was one of the major proponents of this philosophy and author of the Brahma Sutras based on the Upanishads. The concept of Brahman – the Supreme Spirit or the eternal, self existent, immanent and transcedent Supreme and Ultimate Reality which is the divine ground of all Being-is central to most schools of Vedanta. The concept of God or Ishvara is also there, and the Vedantic sub-schools differ mainly in how they identify God with Brahman.

The contents of the Upanishads are often couched in enigmatic language, which has left them open to various interpretetions. Over a period of time, several scholars have interpreted the writings in Upanishads and other scriptures like Brahma Sutras according to their own understanding and the need of their time. There are a total of six important interpretations of these source texts, out of which, three (Advaita Vedanta, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita) are prominent, both in India and abroad. These Vedantic schools of thought were founded by Shri Adishankara, Shri Ramanuja and Shri Madhvacharya, respectively.

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It should be noted, however, that the Indian pre-Shankara Buddhist writer Bhavya in the Madhyamakahrdaya Karika describes the Vedanta philosophy as "Bhedabheda". Proponents of other Vedantic schools continue to write and develop their ideas as well, although their works are not widely known outside of smaller circles of followers in India.

Doctrines: Vedanta is from the Sanskrit meaning "end of the Vedas." This primarily refers to the Upanishads. Vedanta is the most widespread of the six philosophical systems of Hinduism and has contributed most directly to the development of later Hindu thought. There are three main schools of Vedanta. The basic doctrine of Vedanta philosophy is that the *Atman*, self or soul, is identical with Brahman, the All-Soul or Absolute Reality. Brahman is entire and indivisible so one cannot exist separately as a part or an emanation of Brahman. Nothing real exists besides Brahman.

This is the doctrine of the oldest school of Vedanta called Advaita, or non-dualism, which was expounded by the philosopher Shankara. As reality is nondual, the world of phenomena only appears to be real. It is described as maya, illusion, but it does have empirical viability sustained by avidya, ignorance, and only dispelled by Vidya, knowledge, in the form of Jnana, meditative insight. Shankara's personality is paradoxical, for though strongly teaching the Advaita doctrine, he also composed some beautiful and moving hymns. The teachings of Shankara were elaborated by a long line of scholars.

The second most important school is VisistAdvaita, qualified non-dualism, advocated by Ramanuja. This is the doctrine of one God qualified by cit, souls, and acit, matter. God is the only absolute reality and the only object worthy of love and devotion. Matter and souls are equally ultimate and real and are the visesanas, qualities, of God, and are dependent on God as they exist entirely for and within him. Ramanuja successfully joined personal theism with absolutistic philosophy. Lack of faith was more important to him than ignorance in obscuring God. Bhakti, devotion, was essential to gain liberation.

The Dvaita school was founded by Madhva. Reality consists of two principles, God as the one infinite independent principle, and matter and souls, which is finite reality and dependent on God. The material world is essentially real and the distinction between God and jivas, souls, is real and beginningless. There is a fivefold distinction: between God and jivas, between God and insentient objects, between jivas, between jivas and insentient objects, and between insentient objects. Jivas are subject to God and infinite in number with a gradation according to Karma. Moksha, liberation, is attained by the blissful experience of one's pure nature through devotion as a servant of Krishna.

Besides the three main schools, there have been a number of subschools, some of which have split into further groups. The more significant are the traditions of Nimbarka (see Nimavats), Vallabha (see separate entry), and Chaitanya (see Gaufdiya Vaishnavas). Also see entries on Shankara and Dashanamis. Vedantic doctrines have been important in modern Hindu reform movements, such as the Brahmo Samaj (see separate entry), and to many yoga schools. New forms of Vedanta continue to appear, with more recent

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appear, with more recent examples being Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo and the Ramakrishna Mission.

History: Historically, there are three periods of Vedanta. First is the creative period of the Upanishads. The Upanishads were an intellectual and social rebellion against the closed mechanical priesthood supported by the Brahmanas. The oldest Upanishads date from the eighth century BC and are Vedic in being associated with the Brahmanas, texts dealing with the sacred power in the sacrificial ritual.

These early Upanishads are the Brhadaranyaka, Chandogya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, and Kansitaki Upanishads. Of later origin are the Upanishads of a third group, which has only a slight Vedic association or none at all. Many of them are sectarian. Other texts called Upanishads have been written into modern times.The second historical period is that of the systematisation and harmonisation of the Upanishads. The most important text in this is Bandarayanas's Brahma Sutra or Vedanta Sutra. This was a synthesis of Upanishadic doctrine written early in the Common Era. After the Brahma Sutra came a long period of development. The grammarian Bhartrhari in about the fifth century conceived Brahman as essentially word symbolised by om. Gandapada commented on the *Mandukya* Upanishad and said in his doctrine of non-origination that the world is maya, only an appearance. Buddhist influence can be seen in his work.The third historical period is that of commentaries on the Brahma Sutra and commentaries on those commentaries as well as other Vedantic works. The most outstanding exponent of Vedanta was Shankara. It is believed by some scholars that Shankara was first a follower of Patanjali's yoga system. Gandapada was the main influence on Shankara, and tradition says he was the teacher of Shankara's teacher. Shankara lived in the eighth century.

Many pupils and teachers continued the work of Shankara including Mandava Misra and Padmapada. Others founded subschools such as Vachaspati, who joined the teachings of Shankara and Mandana Misra. Other writers of the school of Shankara include Vidyaramja in the fourteenth century, Prakasananda and Madhusudana in the sixteenth century, and Sadananda Vyasa in the seventeenth century. Ramanuja, the founder of VisistAdvaita Vedanta, lived from 1017 to 1137 and Madhva, the founder of Dvaita Vedanta, lived from 1238 to 1317.

The followers of Shankara opposed and persecuted Madhva, who probably as a result taught that Shankara was a reincarnation of the demon Manimat from the Mahabharata.Vedanta has had an important impact on the West, starting with the visit of Swami Vivekananda to the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893. In 1894 he established the Vedanta Society in New York and talked on Vedanta all over America before returning to India to found the Ramakrishna Mission, which is today the foremost Vedanta—inspired religious organisation.

Symbols: Vedanta in theory does not have a wide use of symbolism, especially Advaita. But in practice there are symbols. The sacred syllable om symbolises Brahman as being

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essentially word or speech. There are even images of Shankara worshipped by devotees. An example is the one in a small shrine near Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh on the site where Shankara performed penance during his travels around India.

Modern Vedanta-based groups such as the Ramakrishna Mission have evolved their own symbolism. Ramanuja's school is largely followed by the Shri Vaishnavas, in which devotion plays a large part and is involved with temples and the images of Sri and Vishnu in various forms. Madhva established his main temple himself at Udipi, which he consecrated to Krishna.

In this temple he installed an image of Bala Krishna obtained from Dwarka, and the temple still flourishes. The Madhva school also venerates the other avataras, incarnations, of Vishnu, as well as and the five orthodox gods.

Adherents: Nearly all educated Hindus in modern India are adherents of the Vedanta. About three-quarters follow Shankara's Advaita school, and the remainder are divided among the other schools. Shankara set up the monastic orders of the Dashanamis, with a network all over India. Shri Vaishnavas in South India follow Ramanuja's school and the Madhvas are also mainly in South India.There have been and still are many followers of Vedanta in the West. Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, and others were attracted to the Vedanta Society, established in New York in 1894.

Many schools of yoga have Vedanta as a philosophical base and these are widespread in the West. In India new forms of Vedanta continue to appear and attract adherents. Reform groups such as the Brahmo Samaj are Vedanta inspired. The eclectic thought of Radhakrishnan is based on the Vedanta, but though influential no actual school was founded by him. Sri Aurobindo established a large ashram at Pondicherry.

The Ramakrishna Math and Mission is the major Vedantic organisation with centres all over India and the world. The Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in England produces a magazine Vedanta (formerly called Vedanta for East and West).

The basic problem of Shankara's philosophy is how such pure consciousness appears, in ordinary experience, to be individualized ("my consciousness") and to be of an object ("consciousness of blue"). As he stated it, subject and object are as opposed to each other as light and darkness, yet the properties of one are superimposed on the other. If something is a fact of experience and yet ought not to be so—*i.e.*, is rationally unintelligible—then this must be false.

According to Shankara's theory of error, the false appearance is a positive, presented entity that is characterized neither as existent (because it is sublated when the illusion is corrected) nor as non-existent (because it is presented, given as much as the real is). The false, therefore, is indescribable either as being or as non-being, it is not a fiction, such as a round square. Shankara thus introduced a new category of the "false" apart from the usual categories of the existent and the nonexistent. The world and finite

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individuals are false in this sense: they are rationally unintelligible, their reality is not logically deducible from Brahman, and their experience is cancelled with the knowledge of Brahman.

The world and finite selves are not creations of Brahman; they are not real emanations or transformations of it. Brahman is not capable of such transformation or emanation. They are appearances that are superimposed on Brahman because of man's ignorance. This superimposition was sometimes called adhyasa by Shankara and was often identified with avidya. Later writers referred to avidya as the cause of the error. Thus, ignorance came to be regarded as a beginningless, positive something that conceals the nature of reality and projects the false appearances on it. Shankara, however, did distinguish between three senses of being: the merely illusory (pratibhasika), the empirical (Vyavaharika; which has unperceived existence and pragmatic efficacy), and transcendental being of one, indeterminate Brahman.

In his epistemology, Shankara's followers in general accepted the point of view of the Mimamsa of Kumarila's school. Like Kumarila, they accepted six ways of knowing: perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, nonperception, and postulation. In general, cognitions are regarded as modifications of the inner sense in which the pure spirit is reflected or as the pure spirit limited by respective mental modifications. The truth of cognitions is regarded as intrinsic to them, and a knowable fact is accepted as true so long as it is not rejected as false.

In perception a sort of identity is achieved between the form of the object and the form of the inner sense; in fact, the inner sense is said to assume the form of the object. In their theory of inference, the Nyaya five-membered syllogism is rejected in favour of a three-membered one. Furthermore, the sort of inference admitted by the Nyaya, in which the major term is universally present, is rejected, because nothing save Brahman has this property according to the system.

Shankara regarded moral life as a necessary preliminary to metaphysical knowledge and thus laid down strict ethical conditions to be fulfilled by one who wants to study Vedanta. For him, however, the highest goal of life is to know the essential identity of his own self with Brahman, and though moral life may indirectly help in purifying the mind and intellect, over an extended period of time knowledge comes from following the long and arduous process whose three major stages are study of the scriptures under appropriate conditions, reflection aimed at removing all possible intellectual doubts about the non-dualistic thesis, and meditation on the identity of *Atman* and Brahman.

Moksha is not, according to Shankara, a perfection to be achieved; it is rather the essential reality of one's own self to be realized through destruction of the ignorance that conceals it. God is how Brahman appears to an ignorant mind that regards the world as real and looks for its creator and ruler. Religious life is sustained by dualistic concepts: the dualism between man and God, between virtue and vice, and between this life and

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the next. In the state of Moksha, these dualisms are transcended. An important part of Shankara's faith was that Moksha was possible in bodily existence. Because what brings this supreme state is the destruction of ignorance, nothing need happen to the body; it is merely seen for what it really is—an illusory limitation on the spirit.

Shankara's chief direct pupils were Sureshvara, the author of Varttika ("Gloss") on his bhasya and of Naiskarmya-siddhi ("Establishment of the State of Non-Action"), and Padmapada, author of Panchapadika, a commentary on the first five padas, or sections, of the bhasya. These early pupils raised and settled issues that were not systematically discussed by Shankara himself—issues that later divided his followers into two large groups: those who followed the Vivarana (a work written on Padmapada's Panchapadika by one Prakashatman in the 12th century) and those who followed Vachaspati's commentary (known as Bhamati) on Shankara's bhasya.

Among the chief issues that divided Shankara's followers was the question about the locus and object of ignorance. The Bhamati school regarded the individual self as the locus of ignorance and sought to avoid the consequent circularity (arising from the fact that the individual self is itself a product of ignorance) by postulating a beginningless series of such selves and their ignorances. The Vivarana school regarded both the locus and the object of ignorance to be Brahman and sought to avoid the contradiction (arising from the fact that Brahman is said to be of the nature of knowledge) by distinguishing between pure consciousness and valid knowledge (pramajnana).

The latter, a mental modification, destroys ignorance, and the former, far from being opposed to ignorance, manifests ignorance itself, as evidenced by the judgment "I am ignorant." The two schools also differed in their explanations of the finite individual. The Bhamati school regarded the individual as a limitation of Brahman just as the space within the four walls of a room is a limitation of the big space. The Vivarana school preferred to regard the finite individual as a reflection of Brahman in the inner sense. As the moon is one, but its reflections are many, so also Brahman is one, but its reflections are many.

Later followers of Shankara, such as Shriharsa in his *Khandanakhandakhadya* and his commentator Chitsukha, used a destructive, negative dialectic in the manner of Nagarjuna to criticize man's basic concepts about the world.

Concepts of Bhedabheda

The philosophies of transcendence and immanence (bhedabheda) assert both identity and difference between the world and finite individuals, on the one hand, and Brahman, on the other. The world and finite individuals are real and yet both different and not different from the Brahman.

Among pre-Shankara commentators on the Vedanta-sutras, Bhartrprapancha defended the thesis of bhedabheda, and Bhaskara (c. 9th century) closely followed him.

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Bhartrprapancha's commentary is not extant; the only known source of knowledge is Shankara's reference to him in his commentary on the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, in which *Bhartrprapantilde*; ca is said to have held that though Brahman as cause is different from Brahman as effect, the two are identical inasmuch as the effect dissolves into the cause, as the waves return into the sea. Bhaskara viewed Brahman as both the material and the efficient cause of the world.

The doctrine of maya was totally rejected. Brahman undergoes the modifications by his own power. As waves are both different from and identical with the sea, so are the world and the finite individuals in relation to Brahman. The finite selves are parts of Brahman, as sparks of fire are parts of fire. But the finite soul exists, since beginningless time, under the influence of ignorance. It is atomic in extension and yet animates the whole body. Corresponding to the material world and the finite selves, Bhaskara ascribed to God two powers of self-modification. Bhaskara, in his theory of knowledge, distinguished between self-consciousness that is ever-present and objective knowledge that passively arises out of appropriate causal conditions but is not an activity.

Mind, thus, is a sense organ. Bhaskara subscribed to the general Vedanta thesis that knowledge is intrinsically true, though falsity is extrinsic to it. In his ethical views, Bhaskara regarded religious duties as binding at all stages of life. He upheld a theory known as Jnana-karmasamuchaya-vada: performance of duties together with knowledge of Brahman leads to liberation. In religious life, Bhaskara was an advocate of bhakti, but bhakti is not a mere feeling of love or affection for God, but rather is dhyana, or meditation, directed toward the transcendent Brahman who is not exhausted in his manifestations. Bhaskara denied the possibility of liberation in bodily existence.

The bhedabheda point of view had various other adherents: Vijnanabhiksu, Nimbarka, Vallabha, and Chaitanya.

Ramanuja (11th century) sought to synthesize a long tradition of theistic religion with the absolutistic monism of the Upanishads, a task in which he had been preceded by no less an authority than the Bhagavadgita. In his general philosophical position, he followed the vrttikara Bodhayana, the Vakyakara (to whom he referred but whose identity is not established except that he advocated a theory of real modification of Brahman), Nathamuni (c. 1000), and his own teachers' teacher Yamunacharya (c. 1050).

Ramanuja

The main religious inspirations are from the theistic tradition of the Alvar poet-saints and their commentators known as the Acharyas, who sought to combine knowledge with action (Karma) as the right means to liberation. There is also, besides the Vedic tradition, the religious tradition of Agamas, particularly of the Pancharatra literature. It is within this old tradition that Ramanuja's philosophical and religious thought developed. Ramanuja rejected Shankara's conception of Brahman as an indeterminate, qualityless, and

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differenceless reality on the ground that such a reality cannot be perceived, known, thought of, or even spoken about, in which case it is nothing short of a fiction. In substantiating this contention, Ramanuja undertook, in his Shri-bhasya on the Vedanta-sutras, a detailed examination of the different ways of knowing.

Perception, either non-conceptualized or conceptualized, always apprehends its object as being something, the only difference between the two modes of perception being that the former takes place when one perceives an individual of a certain class for the first time and thus does not subsume it under the same class as some other individuals. Nor can inference provide one with knowledge of an indeterminate reality, because in inference one always knows something as coming under a general rule. The same holds true of verbal testimony.

This kind of knowledge arises from understanding sentences. For Ramanuja there is nothing like a pure consciousness without subject and without object. All consciousness is of something and belongs to someone. He also held that it is not true that consciousness cannot be the object of another consciousness. In fact, one's own past consciousness becomes the object of present consciousness. Consciousness is self-shining only when it reveals an object to its own owner—*i.e.*, the self.

Rejecting Shankara's conception of reality, Ramanuja defended the thesis that Brahman is a being with infinitely perfect excellent virtues, a being whose perfection cannot be exceeded. The world and finite individuals are real, and together they constitute the body of Brahman. The category of body and soul is central to his way of thinking. Body is that which can be controlled and moved for the purpose of the spirit. The material world and the conscious spirits, though substantive realities, are yet inseparable from Brahman and thus qualify him in the same sense in which body qualifies the soul. Brahman is spiritual-material-qualified.

Ramanuja and his followers undertook criticisms of Shankara's illusionism, particularly of his doctrine of avidya (ignorance) and the falsity of the world. For Ramanuja, such a beginningless, positive avidya could not have any locus or any object, and if it does conceal the self-shining Brahman, then there would be no way of escaping from its clutches.

A most striking feature of Ramanuja's epistemology is his uncompromising realism. Whatever is known is real, and only the real can be known. This led him to advocate the thesis that even the object of error is real—error is really incomplete knowledge—and correction of error is really completion of incomplete knowledge.

The state of Moksha is not a state in which the individuality is negated. In fact, the sense of "I" persists even after liberation, for the self is truly the object of the notion of "I." What is destroyed is egoism, the false sense of independence. The means thereto is bhakti, leading to God's grace. But by bhakti Ramanuja means dhyana, or intense meditation with love. Obligation to perform one's scriptural duties is never transcended. Liberation is a state of blessedness in the company of God. A path emphasized by Ramanuja for all

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persons is complete self-surrender (prapatti) to God's will and making oneself worthy of his grace. In his social outlook, Ramanuja believed that bhakti does not recognize barriers of caste and classes.

The doctrinal differences among the followers of Ramanuja is not so great as among Shankara's. Writers such as Sudarshana Suri and Venkatanatha continued to elaborate and defend the theses of the master, and much of their writing is polemical. Some differences are to be found regarding the nature of emancipation, the nature of devotion, and other ritual matters. The followers are divided into two schools: the Uttara-kalarya, led by Venkatanatha, and the Daksina-kalarya, led by Lokacharya. One of the points at issue is whether or not emancipation is destructible; another, whether there is a difference between liberation attained by mere self-knowledge and that attained by knowledge of God. There also were differences in interpreting the exact nature of self-surrender to God and the degree of passivity or activity required of the worshipper.

Madhva

Madhva (born 1199?) belonged to the tradition of Vaisnava religious faith and showed a great polemical spirit in refuting Shankara's philosophy and in converting people to his own fold. An uncompromising dualist, he traced back dualistic thought even to some of the Upanishads. His main works are his commentaries on the Upanishads, the Gita, and the Vedanta-sutras. He also wrote a commentary on the Mahabharata and several logical and polemical treatises.

He glorified difference. Five types of differences are central to Madhva's system: difference between soul and God, between soul and soul, between soul and matter, between God and matter, and that between matter and matter. Brahman is the fullness of qualities, and by his own intrinsic nature, Brahman produces the world. The individual, otherwise free, is dependent only upon God. The Advaita concepts of falsity and indescribability of the world were severely criticized and rejected. In his epistemology, Madhva admitted three ways of knowing: perception, inference, and verbal testimony. In Madhva's system the existence of God cannot be proved; it can be learned only from the scriptures.

Bondage and release both are real and devotion is the only way to release, but ultimately it is God's grace that saves. Scriptural duties, when performed without any ulterior motive, purify the mind and help one to receive God's grace. Among the other theistic schools of Vedanta, brief mention may be made of the schools of Nimbarka (c. 12th century), Vallabha (15th century), and Chaitanya (16th century).

Nimbarka

Nimbarka's philosophy is known as Bhedabheda because he emphasized both identity and difference of the world and finite souls with Brahman. His religious sect is known as the *Sanaka-Sampradaya* of Vaisnavism. Nimbarka's commentary of the Vedanta-

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sutras is known as *Vedanta-parijata-saurabha* and is commented on by Shrinivasa in his *Vedanta-kaustubha*. Of the three realities admitted—God, souls, and matter—God is the independent reality, self-conscious, controller of the other two, free from all defects, abode of all good qualities, and both the material and efficient cause of the world.

The souls are dependent, self-conscious, capable of enjoyment, controlled, atomic in size, many in number, and eternal but seemingly subject to birth and death because of ignorance and Karma. Matter is of three kinds: nonnatural matter, which constitutes divine body; natural matter constituted by the three gunas; and time. Both souls and matter are pervaded by God. Their relation is one of difference-with-nodifference.

Liberation is because of a knowledge that makes God's grace possible. There is no need for Vedic duties after knowledge is attained, nor is performance of such duties necessary for acquiring knowledge.

Vallabha

Vallabha's commentary on the Vedanta-sutras is known as Anubhasya ("The Brief Commentary"), which is commented upon by Purusottama in his Bhasya-prakasha ("Lights on the Commentary"). His philosophy is called pure non-dualism—"pure" meaning "undefiled by maya." His religious sect is known as the Rudra-Sampradaya of Vaisnavism and also Pustimarga, or the path of grace. Brahman, or Shri Krishna, is viewed as the only independent reality; in his essence he is existence, consciousness, and bliss, and souls and matter are his real manifestations.

Maya is but his power of self-manifestation. Vallabha admitted neither parinama (of Samkhya) nor Vivarta (of Shankara). According to him, the modifications are such that they leave Brahman unaffected. From his aspect of "existence" spring life, senses, and body. From "consciousness" spring the finite, atomic souls. From "bliss" spring the presiding deities, or antaryamins, for whom Vallabha finds place on his ontology. This threefold nature of God pervades all beings.

World is real; but samsara, the cycle of birth and death, is unreal, and time is regarded as God's power of action. Like all other Vedantins, Vallabha rejected the Vaishesika relation of samavaya and replaced it by tadatmya, or identity. The means to liberation is bhakti, which is defined as firm affection for God and also loving service (seva). Bhakti does not lead to knowledge, but knowledge is regarded as a part of bhakti. The notion of "grace" plays an important role in Vallabha's religious thought. He is also opposed to renunciation.

Chaitanya

Chaitanya (1485-1533) was one of the most influential and remarkable of the medieval saints of India. His life is characterized by almost unique emotional fervour, hovering on the pathological, which was directed toward Shri Krishna (the incarnation of Vishnu). He

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has not written anything, but the discourses recorded by contemporaries give an idea of his philosophical thought that was later developed by his followers, particularly by Rupa Gosvamin and Jiva Gosvamin. Rupa is the author of two great works: *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* ("The Ocean of the Nectar of the Essence of Bhakti") and *Ujjvalanilamani* ("The Shining Blue Jewel"). Jiva's main work is the great and voluminous Satsamdarbha.

These are the main sources of the philosophy of Bengal Vaisnavism. Chaitanya rejected the conception of an intermediate Brahman. Brahman, according to him, has three powers: the transcendent power that is threefold (the power of bliss, the power of being, and the power of consciousness) and the two immanent powers, namely, the powers of creating souls and the material world. Jiva Gosvamin regarded bliss to be the very substance of Brahman who, with the totality of all his powers, is called God. Jiva distinguished between God's essential power, his peripheral power that creates the souls, and the external power (called maya) that creates cosmic forms. The relation between God and his powers is neither identity nor difference, nor identity-with-difference.

This relation, unthinkable and suprarational, is central to Chaitanya's philosophy. For Jiva, the relation between any whole and its parts is unthinkable. Bhakti is the means to emancipation. Bhakti is conceived as a reciprocal relation between man and God, a manifestation of God's power in man. The works of Jiva and Rupa delineated a detailed and fairly exhaustive classification of the types and gradations of bhakti.

Vedanta in Daily Life

The Upanishads form the basis of Vedanta. Vedanta is the basic culture of India. It is the national philosophy of India. It is the Moksha Sastra or the Science of Emancipation. Absolutism is the pivot of Vedanta philosophy.

Vedanta upholds the reality of the indivisible, immanent and transcendent Spirit. It does not exclude matter. It does not exclude anything. The oneness of all existence is the message which Vedanta teaches. It has kept Hindu society alive for the past several thousand years.

Vedanta is the only bold philosophy which dares call man God, not merely the son of God, or His servant. It proclaims with emphasis that you are the immortal, all-pervading *Atman*, the Universal Soul or Supreme Brahman in essence, in reality. Boldness is the key-note of Vedanta. The message of Vedanta is fearlessness, soul-force and unity of consciousness.

Vedanta does not ask for converts or proselytes, but a deeper reassessment of the divine-human equation, a return to the fundamental question of every being: "What am I really ? What is my real Self ?" Vedanta proclaims: "Man, in essence, is identical with the Supreme Being."

Vedanta denotes one's identity with the rest of humanity. According to Vedanta, there is no stranger in this world. Everyone is related to one another in the kinship of the Spirit.

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In Vedanta, there is no 'mine' and 'for me'; but 'ours' and 'for us'; and ultimately, 'His' and 'for Him'. If the Vedanta philosophy is rightly understood and acted up to, then it will obliterate all evils that emanate from factional and racial prejudices. Vedanta is no creed, no ceremony or form of worship. It is the science of right living. It is not the sole monopoly of the Hindus or the recluses. It is for all.

Vedanta has no quarrel with any religion whatsoever. It preaches universal principles. Vedanta is the only universal, eternal religion. It is a great leveler. It unites all. It gives room to all.

Vedanta encloses within its sphere all the religions of the world and is strong enough to make them all useful and enduring. Vedanta never interferes with forms. It concerns itself solely with the life of religions. The Christian need not renounce his Christianity, the Buddhist may stick to his Noble Eightfold path, the Muslim may stick to his Quran, and yet all these may follow the Vedanta and realize in practice all its high ideals and truths. Their love to their respective prophets and Bibles will become more sober, more enlightened, and more enduring. Religious animosity will vanish and the world will move on to its great end without any friction, with greater dignity and more goodwill among its denizens.

Vedanta means no slavery. It gives freedom to all. It never condemns any man as beyond hope, never looks upon anyone as accused, but takes all mankind within its fold. Vedanta is extremely catholic and liberal in its outlook. Vedanta can offer to the modern society a common faith, a common body of principles, and a common moral discipline. It is highly scientific in outlook and has a real appeal to men and women of today.

There is no philosophy so bold and sublime as the philosophy of the Vedanta. It is Vedanta alone that can eradicate totally human sufferings and can bring everlasting peace and happiness. Even a little understanding and a little practice of Vedanta can raise a man to magnanimous heights of Brahmanhood or God-consciousness and remove all sorts of fears, worries and anxieties of this mundane life.

Some ignorant people only say that Vedanta preaches immorality, hatred and pessimism. This is a very sad mistake. Vedanta does not preach either immorality or even indifference to morality. Vedanta wants you to destroy Moha or selfish love and passion for the body, and develop pure, disinterested cosmic love or the magnanimous divine Love. Vedanta never preaches pessimism, but it preaches the pinnacle of optimism. Licentiousness is mistaken for a life of expansion. If a man can eat anything in any hotel in any part of the world, if he can move socially with any man or woman, that does not mean he is a Vedantin. There is much tall talk of Vedanta nowadays. People talk of unity, oneness and equality, but fight out for little, useless things. They are full of jealousy and hatred. I cannot imagine this. I am simply stunned.

I believe in practical Vedanta. I believe in solid spiritual practices. I believe in thorough overhauling of worldly nature, worldliness of various sorts.

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You must be a practical Vedantin. You should live in the spirit of Vedanta. Mere theorizing and lecturing is only intellectual gymnastics and lingual warfare. This will not suffice. What is the use of reading too many books on Vedanta like Chit-Sukhi, Khandana Khanda Khadyam, etc. ? You must radiate love to one and all. The spirit of Vedanta must be ingrained in your cells, tissues, veins, nerves and bones. It must become part and parcel of your nature. You must think of unity, speak of unity and act in unity.

The sun, the Ganga, the flowers, the sandal trees, the fruit-bearing trees, the cows- all teach practical Vedanta to the world. They live for serving the humanity in a disinterested spirit. The sun radiates its light alike over a cottage of a peasant and a palace of a king. The cool refreshing waters of the Ganga are drunk by all. The flowers waft their fragrance to all without expecting anything. The sandal tree wafts its aroma even to the man who cuts it with an axe. All fruit-bearing trees behave in the same manner. O selfish, ignorant man ! Learn lessons from these practical Vedantins and become wise.

Vedanta does not preach a doctrine of negation of human effort. It wants you to have a changed mental attitude. It demands a changed angle of vision. Till now, the world was everything. Hereafter, the Reality alone is everything.

Once there lived two friends, Ram and Gopal. They were both philosophers. By analysis and self-enquiry, Ram learned to see the Glory of the Supreme Self reflected in and through all the universe. But Gopal continued to remain a theoretical philosopher, condemning the universe as an illusion and dream containing nothing but evil and vice.

One day, after a long time, Ram called on his friend. Gopal discussed, for a long time, as usual, the evil in this universe, and in the end asked Ram what present he had brought for his friend. Ram, after thinking a while, produced a broken piece of mirror from his pocket and handing it over to Gopal, said, "This is my little and humble present. It will help you to understand your own beauty and charm, which you cannot otherwise see."

Gopal learnt a lesson, and from that moment began to visualize and understand the Glory of the Supreme Self reflected in all the universe. Nothing is useless in this world. The non-self exists to reflect and glorify the Self. Otherwise how can you know the existence of the Self ? Verily, the non-self is the mirror that truly reflects the Self for us to cognize.

So, too, evil is the mirror for good. The presence of sages and saints is easily cognized amidst an assembly of ignorant men. Learn to see the good reflected by the evil, and say, "Evil exists to remind me of good, the perishable exists to remind me of the Imperishable," and so on.

Truly, this universe is a mirror that reminds us of God. Learn not to condemn it as an illusion and dream, but to utilize it to feel the presence of God.

Learn to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent. Behold the Self in all beings, in all objects. Share what you have, physical, mental, moral or spiritual, with all. Serve the Self in all. Feel when you serve others, that you are serving your own

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Self. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Melt all illusory differences. Remove all barriers that separate man from man. Mix with all. Embrace all. Destroy the sex-idea and body-idea by constantly thinking on the Self or the sexless, bodiless *Atman*. Fix the mind on the Self when you work. This is practical Vedanta. This is the essence of the teachings of the Upanishads and sages of yore. This is real, eternal life in *Atman*. Put these things in practice in the daily battle of life. You will shine as dynamic Yogin or Jivanmukta. There is no doubt of this.

The Absolute Reality which is the fundamental cause of the universe and all beings is full (beyond all limitations which can be caused by time, space, and material). It is pure, free indivisible and homogeneous Consciousness. The individual self *Jiva*) which appears limited by time, space, and material, or name and form, is also full, pure, free, indivisible and homogeneous Consciousness. The individual Consciousness (self) which is full has come from that Absolute Consciousness which is also full. Here comes a discrepancy. How can something full come from something that is also full and still both remain full? This disparity is solved by the illustration of space. Space is recognized as full, free, pure, boundless, unattached, all-pervading, indivisible and homogeneous. When a barrier is erected in space, we say the space is divided and call it "room space, limited space,", etc. If there is dust or contamination in the room, we say the space in the room is dusty or impure. We all know that space cannot be divided or become impure.

It is always full, free, pure and indivisible. The divisions are assumed due to the barriers we construct in space. Similar is the nature of the Absolute Consciousness which is the Supreme Reality. Nothing can ever come from it. It alone exists. The separate individuality which one feels is due to the limiting adjuncts of body-mind complex which are, in reality, illusory appearances like dream objects or mirage seen in a desert or a rope mistakenly seen as a snake in dim light. When viewed in its real nature as Pure Consciousness alone, divested of its limitations, the individual Self is known to be one and the same Absolute Consciousness.

Vedanta is the teachings of the Upanishads (the concluding chapters of the four Vedas), the Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, and their commentaries by Shri Shankaracharya, the 8th century philosopher saint. *Veda* means "knowledge" and *anta* means "end". Thus Vedanta means "the end of knowledge".

Sub-schools of Vedanta

Advaita Vedanta: Advaita Vedanta is the most influential school of all, and many philosopers, both Indian and Western, have been influenced by it. It was propounded by Adi Shankara, a great Hindu philosopher, and his Paramaguru Gaudapada, who described Ajativada. According to this school of Vedanta, Brahman is the only reality, and the world, as it appears, is illusory. As Brahman is the sole reality, it cannot be said to possess any attributes whatsoever. An illusionary power of Brahman called My causes the world to arise. Ignorance of this reality is the cause of all suffering in the world and only upon

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true knowledge of Brahman can liberation be attained. When a person tries to know Brahman through his mind, due to the influence of My, Brahman appears as God (Ishvara), separate from the world and from the individual. In reality, there is no difference between the individual soul *j+vtman* (see *Atman*) and Brahman. Liberation lies in knowing the reality of this non-difference (*i.e.* a-dvaita, "not-two" ness). Thus, the path to liberation is finally only through knowledge (*jnna*).

Vishishtadvaita: Vishishtadvaita was propounded by Ramanuja and says that the *j+vtman* is a part of Brahman, and hence is similar, but not identical. The main difference from Advaita is that in Visishtadvaita, the Brahman is asserted to have attributes, including the individual conscious souls and matter. Brahman, matter and the individual souls are distinct but mutually inseparable entities. This school propounds Bhakti or devotion to God visualized as Vishnu to be the path to liberation. My is seen as the creative power of God.

Dvaita: Dvaita was propounded by Madhva. It identifies God with Brahman completely, and in turn with Vishnu or his incarnation Krishna. It regards Brahman, all individual souls (*j+vtmans*) and matter as eternal and mutually separate entities. This school also advocated Bhakti as the route to liberation. There is no concept of My as an illusionary power behind the world.

Dvaitdvaita: Dvaitdvaita was propounded by Nimbrka, based upon an earlier school called Bhedbheda, which was taught by Bhaskara. According to this school, the *jivtman* is at once the same as yet different from Brahman.Jiva relation may be regarded as dvaita from one point of view and Advaita from another.

ShuddhAdvaita: ShuddhAdvaita propounded by Vallabha. This system also encouraged Bhakti as the only means of liberation to go to Goloka (lit., the world of cows). The world is said to be the sport (Leela) of Krishna, who is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

Achintya Bhedbheda: Achintya Bhedbheda propounded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This doctrine is followed by the world famous ISKCON movement.

While Adi Shankara propounded the Smrta denomination, all the other above-mentioned acharyas were strongly Vaishnavite in orientation. The epistemology of Advaita, Vishishtadvaita and Mimamsa (*i.e.*, Purva) is common.

Purnadvaita or Integral Advaita: Sri Aurobindo, in his The Life Divine, has synthesized all the exant schools of Vedanta and given the most comprehensive resolution integrating cues from the Western metaphysics and modern science. He has also restored the umbilical cord of the Vedantic exegesis with the Vedas. For instance, his strong difference with Adi Shankara over the interpretation of *Ishavasyam* is interesting.

The Advaita Parampara

Narayanam padmabhuvam vasishtham. Shaktim. ca tatputra parasaram. ca

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vyasam. Sukam. Gaudapadam. mahantam. govindayogindram athasya Sishyam.
Sri Shankaracharyan athasya Padmapadam. ca Hastamalakam. ca Sishyam.
tam. totakam. varttikakaramanyan asmad gurun santatamanatosmi
Sadasiva samarambham. Shankaracharya madhyamam.
asmadacharya paryantam. vande guru paramparam.

These are the Advaita *guru parampara* verses, which salute the prominent gurus of Advaita, starting from narayana through Shankara and his disciples, upto the Acharyas of today. It is typical of Advaita that the first guru is called *narayana* (Vishnu) in the first verse and Sadasiva (Shiva) in the second. The parampara thus lists:

Narayana
Padmabhuva (brahma)
Vasishtha
Shakti
Parasara
Vyasa
Suka
Gaudapada
Govinda Bhagavatpada
Shankaracharya
Padmapada, Hastamalaka, Totaka, Suresvara (Varttikakara), and others (anya:).

In the Indian religious and philosophical traditions, all knowledge is traced back to the Gods and to the Rishis who saw the vedas. Thus, the Advaita *Guru-parampara* begins with the *Daiva-parampara,* followed by the *Rishi-parampara*, which includes the vedic seers vasishtha, Shakti, parasara, his son Vyasa, (the famous redactor of the vedas, he is also traditionally identified with Badarayana, the composer of the Brahmasutras), and vyasa's son Suka. After Suka, we turn to the *Manava-parampara*, which brings us to historical times and personalities.

The traditions regarding these human gurus are recorded in the *Shankaravijaya* literature, and typically, they are regarded as incarnations of various deities Gaudapada is the famous author of the *Mandukya Karikas* that are attached to the *Mandukya Upanishad*. His disciple, Govinda, is regarded as an incarnation of Adisesha, the cosmic serpent. He was the preceptor of Shankara, who is regarded as an incarnation of Shiva. Shankara's four well-known disciples were named *Padmapada, Hastamalaka*, totaka and Suresvara (Varttikakara). Tradition has it that Shankara appointed these four disciples

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as heads of the four Mathas that he founded. The others are the gurus who come later in the tradition.

The doctrine of Advaita Vedanta as expounded by Shankara can be summed up in half a verse: "*Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva Na Aparah*"—Brahman (the Absolute) is alone real; this world is unreal; and the Jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman. This is the quintessence of his philosophy.

According to Sri Shankara, whatever is, is Brahman. Brahman Itself is absolutely homogeneous. All difference and plurality are illusory.

Tenets of Advaita Vedanta

- Brahman (the Absolute) is alone real; this world is unreal; and the Jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman.
- The *Atman* is self-evident (Svatah-siddha). It is not established by extraneous proofs. It is not possible to deny the *Atman*, because it is the very essence of the one who denies It.
- Brahman is not an object, as it is Adrisya, beyond the reach of senses, mind or intellect. It is not another. It is all-full, infinite, changeless, self-existent, self-delight, self-knowledge and self-bliss. It is Svarupa, essence. It is the essence of the knower. It is the Seer (Drashta), Transcendent (Turiya) and Silent Witness (Sakshi). It is always the Witnessing Subject. It can never become an object as it is beyond the reach of the senses. Brahman is non-dual, one without a second. It has no other beside it.
- Sat-Chit-Ananda constitute the very essence or Svarupa of Brahman, and not just its attributes.
- The world is not an illusion according to Shankara. The world is relatively real (Vyavaharika Satta), while Brahman is absolutely real (Paramarthika Satta). The unchanging Brahman appears as the changing world because of a superimposition of non-Self (objects) or Self (subject-Brahman). This is called Avidya.
- The Jiva or the individual soul is only relatively real. Its individuality lasts only so long as it is subject to unreal Upadhis or limiting conditions due to Avidya. The Jiva identifies itself with the body, mind and the senses, when it is deluded by Avidya or ignorance. Just as the bubble becomes one with the ocean when it bursts, so also the Jiva or the empirical self becomes one with Brahman when it gets knowledge of Brahman. When knowledge dawns in it through annihilation of Avidya, it is freed from its individuality and finitude and realizes its essential Sacchidananda nature. It merges itself in the ocean of bliss. The river of life joins the ocean of existence. This is the Truth.
- Because Samsara (or duality) exists due to ignorance or Avidya, Knowledge (Jnana) alone can make an individual realize his true nature. Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga,

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Raja Yoga, etc., are necessary only to purify the individual and to help remove this Avidya. All other paths culminate in Jnana.

- Brahma Jnana is not about acquiring any external knowledge (as Brahman can't be an object of knowledge), it just about removing the Avidya or Maya.

Brahma Sutras (Vedanta Sutras)

ADHYAYA 1

Adhikarana/ Sutra

PADA 1

1. Then, therefore, enquiry into Brahman.
2. From which springs the origination.
3. Scripture alone is the means.
4. All the scriptures' ultimate goal is Brahman.

5-11. Non intelligent pradhana (of Sankhya) cannot be the (seeing and willing) cause of the world.

6-12. 'Anandamaya' mentioned in the (Taittiriya) Upanisad is the Supreme Lord, not Jiva.

20-21. The golden person seen within the sun and within the eye, mentioned in the Chandogya Upanisad (1.6) is not a Jiva of high eminence, but the Supreme Lord.

22. The ether mentioned in Ch. 1.6 is not the elemental ether but the Supreme Lord.

23. The prana mentioned in Ch. 1.11.5 denotes the Supreme Lord.

24-27. The light spoken of in Ch. 3.13.7 is not physical light, but the Supreme Lord.

28-31. The prana mentioned in *Kausitaki* 3.2. is the Supreme Lord.

PADA 2

1-8. 'Manomaya' and *'prana sarira'* mentioned in Ch 3.14.1,2 is not Jiva, but the Supreme Lord.

9-10. The Being to whom Brahmanas and Kshatriyas are food, referred to in Katha 1.2.24 is the Supreme Lord.

11-12. The two entered into the cave-Katha 1.3.1-are the Supreme Lord and Jiva.

13-17. The person within the eye-Ch. 4.15.1 is the Supreme Lord.

18-20. *'Antaryamin'* mentioned in Br. 3.7.3 is the Supreme Lord (not *pradhana* nor *Jiva*).

21-23. Being described as possessed of invisibility in Mund. 1.1.56 is the Supreme Lord (not pradhana or Jiva).

24-32. *'Atma vaisvanarah'* in Ch. 5.11.6 is the Supreme Lord.

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PADA 3

1-7. Being within whom heaven and earth are woven, as in Mund. 2.2.5 is the Supreme Lord, because of the term 'atman' (not *pradhana* or *Jiva*).

8-9. 'Bhuman' (the great) in Ch. 7.23.24 is the Supreme Lord (not prana).

10-12. 'Aksara' (imperishable) in Br. 3.88 is the Supreme Lord.

13. '*Para purusa*' to be meditated upon by 'om' in Prasna. 5.5 is the Supreme Lord (because it is described as object of realization).

14-23. 'Dahara akasah' within the lotus of the heart in Ch. 8.1.1. is not elemental ether or Jiva but the Supreme Lord (-grammatical arguments!-).(22 & 23 as 6) by Shankara.

24-25. The thumb size Being in Katha 2.4.13 is not Jiva, but the Supreme Lord.

26-33. Gods qualified for Brahmavidya? (animals already denied in 7)

34-38. Sudras denied qualification.

39. The prana before whom everything trembles as in Katha 2.6.2 is the Supreme Lord.

40. Jyoti mentioned in Ch. 8.12.3 is the Supreme Lord.

41. The ether that reveals names and forms as in Ch. 8.14.1 is neither the elemental ether, nor the Jiva, but the Supreme Lord.

42-43. *Vijnana maya* in Br. 4.3-7 is not Jiva but the Supreme Lord.

PADA 4

1-7. *Avyakta* in Katha 1.3.10,11 does not denote pradhana, but the subtle body (and gross body?).

8-10. *Tri rupa aja* in Svet. 4.5 cannot be Pradhana or Prakrti but the transcendental energy of the Supreme Lord who is the cause of all causes.

11-13. *Pancha pancha janah* in Br. 4.4.17 are not the twenty five principles but the five pranas.

14-15. The Supreme intelligent Lord is the cause of the world not the individual soul, but the Supreme Lord.

23-27. The Supreme Lord is not only the nimitta karana (efficient cause) but upadana (material cause) as well.

28. All the passages in Vedanta are referring to the Supreme Lord only.

ADHYAYA 2

PADA 1

1-2. Sankhya rejected because it is against Shruti.

3. Yoga rejected.

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4-11. Objection that non intelligent world cannot be caused by intelligent Supreme Lord (Brahman) is answered. By the effect produced the cause, Lord, is not contaminated.

12. Atomic theory refuted like above.

13. The enjoyer Lord and the enjoyed Jiva are qualitatively one.

14-20. Vaisesika doctrine of effect as something new created from the cause is refuted. The effect is only transformation of the energies of the Lord.

21-23. Brhad 2.4.5, Ch.8.7.1, Br.4.3.35-Jiva is simultaneously one and different from the Lord

24-25. The Lord creates the world by His mere will.

26-29. The Lord creates the world without entirely passing over it, and at the same time remaining one and undivided.

30-31. The Lord, unassisted, can create the world through His variegated transcendental potencies.

32-33. He has no self interest in creating the world (lila).

34-36. The Lord is not to be blamed for the happiness and distress of the jivas—He sanctions results according to the *merits-samsara* is beginningless.

37. The Lord is omniscient and omnipotent and capable of creating the world.

PADA 2

1-10. Refutation of *Sankhya*; non intelligent *pradhana* cannot possibly create or proceed with any activity without the guidance of an intelligent being.

11-17. Refutation of *Vaisesika*; atoms as the cause of creation defeated.

18-32. Refutation of Bauddhas (Buddhists) *bahyarthavadins* (both the material objects *sarvastitvavadins* and their cognitions are real) (realists) *vijnanavadins* (ideas only are real *Yogacharas* external objects apart from (idealists) their cognitions have no independent existence) *sunyavadis* (everything is void) (nihilists)

33-36. Refutation of Jaina.

37-41. Refutation of Pasupata (refuting that Ishvara is only the efficient cause).

42-45. Refutation of Säkta.

PADA 3

1-7. Earth is not co-eternal with Lord but the first effect.

8. Air from earth.

9. The Lord has no cause.

10-12. Fire from air, water from fire, earth from water.

13. The Lord is the cause of these elements but He is not affected by these elements.

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14. The reabsorbtion of the elements is inverse to this order.
15. This is not disturbed by the organs and senses because they are created and destroyed with the elements which they consist.
16. The birth and death belong to the body and not to the Jiva.
17. Jiva is never created.
18. Knowledge is a constitutional character of Jiva.
19-32. Jiva is infinitesimal, has knowledge as his attribute.
33-40. Kartrtva is a natural attribute of Jiva.
41-42. This kartrtva of the Jiva depends upon the Lord.
43-53. The relationship between Jiva and the Lord

PADA 4

1-4. Pranas are created from the Lord.
5-6. They are eleven in number (Jnana, Karma-indriyas and intelligence).
7. They are anu (subtle).
8. Attributes of pranas transferred (atidesa) to chief vital air.
9-12. Nature and character of the chief vital air.
13. It is subtle (anu).
14-16. It is controlled by the Supreme Lord.
17-19. Pranas are not modifications of the chief vital air, they are independent principles.
20-22. Activity of creation belongs to the Super soul not to the Jiva.

ADHYAYA 3

PADA 1

1-7. Individual Jiva in obtaining a different body continues with the same subtle body.
8-11. The souls who have enjoyed results of pious activities in the moon descend to earth-with an amsa of their previous pious *karmas* for which results cannot be enjoyed in the moon, but must be enjoyed in this planet only—which determines the design of the new body.
12-21. Those who have knowledge (*Vidya*) and who perform sacrifices ascend to moon. For the rest there is the third place, Yama's abode.
22. The subtle bodies descending from moon, through the ether, air, etc., do not become identical with them, but only resemble them.
23. The entire descent of the soul occupies a very short time only.
24-27. When the souls finally enter into plants and so on they do not participate in the life of the plants but are merely in external contact with them.

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PADA 2

1-6. The creation of the dreaming state is also willed by the Supreme Lord—they are real to the extent that they are indications of future (or recollections of past).

7-8. In dreamless sleep the Jiva abides with Super soul within the heart.

9. The soul awakening from the sleep is the same as before, otherwise he won't be remembering past experiences and injunctions of sacrifices.

10. Swoon is midway between sleep and death.

11-21. Supreme Lord is *nirvisesa* because He is *prakrta rupa hina*. The attributes of Jiva and matter do not apply to the Lord. He is not materially affected, being transcendental.

22-26. Supreme Lord possesses infinite number of transcendental attributes beyond limitations.

27-30. Matter is transformation of the Lord's energy-so it is one and in the same time different from Him.

PADA 3

1-4. The cognitions of the Lord, taught by all the Vedantic texts, are identical on account of the non-difference of injunctions (*upasita-vidyat*, etc.).

5. Since the goal is the Supreme Lord wherever there are contradictions and different kinds of processes mentioned in the scriptures, *upasamhara* (tallying) is necessary-actually the process is one and the same. Sandilya Vidya in three passages is one and the same (though various details differ). *Vaisvanara Vidya* (Ch. 5.12.2, *Satapatha* 10.6.1-11) is identical-the process, the goal are same. *Katha* 1.2.15-that word which all the Vedas record. Aitareya 3.2.3.12-Him only the bahvrcas consider in the great hymn, the Adhvaryus in the sacrificial fire, the Chandogas in the mahavrata ceremony.

6-8. The subject of chandogya Vidya (1.1.3) is only the sacred om while the Brhad 1.3 represents the whole udgitha as goal.

9-10. Are all qualities to be included in meditation on the Lord?

11-13. Only the essential and unalterable attributes such as ananda and Jnana are to be taken into account everywhere.

14-26. similar subject.

27-31. Regarding the soul's freeing himself on death and on liberation.

32-54. Regarding the synthesis of different processes considering the goal.

PADA 4

1-50. The knowledge of Brahman is not subordinate to action, but independent. The ashrama karmani are obligatory for him who does not strive for *mukti balya*, *panditya* and *mauna* are three conditions enjoined for the *Sannyasin*.

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51-52. Liberation is either immediately after death or gradual according to the *sadhana*.

ADHYAYA 4

PADA 1

1-2. Meditation on the Lord as enjoined in the scriptures is to be repeated again and again until the realization of the final goal takes place.

3. The goal of meditation is the Lord who is the soul of all.

4. Regarding *pratikopasana*.

5. Supreme Lord is the only object of meditation.

6. In angopasanas the Lord who is ultimately the controller of everything should be the goal.

7-10. Regarding time and place and period of meditation.

11. It should be done favorably beyond conditions.

12. Till death the process should be continued.

13. On liberation no more control by Karma.

14. -same (pious Karma)-

15. Devotional activities prevail

16-17. They promote the origination of knowledge.

19. The realized vidvan may have to pass through several embodied existences before the *arabdhakarya karmas* will have their effects completely exhausted.

PADA 2

1-7. The path of liberation after death.

8-11. Till total liberation the subtle body continues.

12-14. Similar.

15-16. On liberation the elements merge with elements.

17. The conditioned Jiva passes from the heart out of the body. The Jiva liberated passes through the head, through susumna, the 101st vein.

18-19. The liberated soul even if departs at night passes through a ray of light through the sun.

20-21. Even if departing in daksinayana the liberated soul attains the supreme abode.

PADA 3

1-3. Reconciliation of different accounts given in the *Upanishads* (Ch. 5.10.1, Kaus. 1.3, Br. 6.2.15, etc.) as to the stations of this path and establish the path (deva-yana as opposed to pitr-yana). The stages are Agni, the day, the

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bright half of the month and *uttarayana*, the year, *Vayu*, *Aditya*, *chandramas*, lightning, *Varuna*, *Indra*, *Prajapati*, and the *Brahman*.

4-6. These places mean the controlling deities.

7-16. Considering the different opinions of the philosophers regarding who is led to what goal.

PADA 4

1-3. The soul on liberation attains to its original nature and does not acquire new attributes.

4. The liberated soul realizes itself as qualitatively one with the Lord.

5-7. Nature of the released soul-has transcendental attributes which are constitutional.

8-9. All his desires are satisfied by exercise of his free will properly.

10-14. The released soul attains a spiritual body (attains body of its own will).

15-16. The liberated soul on attaining constitutional position can exist in many transcendental bodies.

17-22. The liberated soul participates in all the opulences of the Lord, except the power of creating and sustaining the world. He goes back home back to Godhead and never returns.

Two worlds there are in which we live, one the external, the other internal. Human progress has been made, from days of yore, almost in parallel lines along both these worlds. The search began in the external, and man at first wanted to get answers for all the deep problems from outside nature. Man wanted to satisfy his thirst for the beautiful and the sublime from all that surrounded him; he wanted to express himself and all that was within him in the language of the concrete; and grand indeed were the answers he got, most marvellous ideas of God and worship, and most rapturous expressions of the beautiful. Sublime ideas came from the external world indeed.

But the other, opening out for humanity later, laid out before him a universe yet sublimer, yet more beautiful, and infinitely more expansive. In the Karma Kanda portion of the Vedas, we find the most wonderful ideas of religion inculcated, we find the most wonderful ideas about an overruling Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe presented before us in language sometimes the most soul-stirring. Most of you perhaps remember the most wonderful Shloka in the *Rig-Veda Samhita* where you get the description of chaos, perhaps the sublimest that has ever been attempted yet.

In spite of all this, we find it is only a painting of the sublime outside, we find that yet it is gross, that something of matter yet clings to it. Yet we find that it is only the expression of the Infinite in the language of matter, in the language of the finite, it is the infinite of the muscles and not of the mind; it is the infinite of space and not of thought. Therefore in the second portion of *Jnana Kanda*, we find there is altogether a different

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procedure. The first was a search in external nature for the truths of the universe; it was an attempt to get the solution of the deep problems of life from the material world. "Whose glory these Himalayas declare". This is a grand idea, but yet it was not grand enough for India.

The Indian mind had to fall back, and the research took a different direction altogether; from the external the search came to the internal, from matter to mind. There arose the cry, "When a man dies, what becomes of him?" "Some say that he exists, others that he is gone; say, O king of Death, what is the truth?" An entirely different procedure we find here. The Indian mind got all that could be had from the external world, but it did not feel satisfied with that; it wanted to search further, to dive into its own soul, and the final answer came.

The Upanishads, or the Vedanta, or the Aranyakas, or Rahasya is the name of this portion of the Vedas. Here we find at once that religion has got rid of all external formalities. Here we find at once that spiritual things are told not in the language of matter, but in the language of the spirit; the superfine in the language of the superfine. No more any grossness attaches to it, no more is there any compromise with things of worldly concern. Bold, brave, beyond the conception of the present day, stand the giant minds of the sages of the Upanishads, declaring the noblest truths that have ever been preached to humanity, without any compromise, without any fear. This, my countrymen, I want to lay before you. Even the *Jnana Kanda* of the Vedas is a vast ocean; many lives are necessary to understand even a little of it. Truly has it been said of the Upanishads by Ramanuja that they form the head, the shoulders, the crest of the Vedas, and surely enough the Upanishads have become the Bible of modern India. The Hindus have the greatest respect for the *Karma Kanda* of the Vedas, but, for all practical purposes, we know that for ages by Shruti has been meant the Upanishads, and the Upanishads alone.

We know that all our great philosophers, whether *Vyasa*, *Patanjali*, or *Gautama*, and even the father of all philosophy, the great *Kapila* himself, whenever they wanted an authority for what they wrote, every one of them found it in the Upanishads, and nowhere else, for therein are the truths that remain for ever.

There are truths that are true only in a certain line, in a certain direction, under certain circumstances, and for certain times—those that are founded on the institutions of the times. There are other truths which are based on the nature of man himself, and which must endure so long as man himself endures. These are the truths that alone can be universal, and in spite of all the changes that have come to India, as to our social surroundings, our methods of dress, our manner of eating, our modes of worship—these universal truths of the Shrutis, the marvellous Vedantic ideas, stand out in their own sublimity, immovable, unvanquishable, deathless, and immortal.

Yet the germs of all the ideas that were developed in the Upanishads had been taught already in the Karma Kanda. The idea of the cosmos which all sects of Vedantists had

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to take for granted, the psychology which has formed the common basis of all the Indian schools of thought, had there been worked out already and presented before the world. A few words, therefore, about the Karma Kanda are necessary before we begin the spiritual portion, the Vedanta; and first of all we like to explain the sense in which we have used the word Vedanta.

Unfortunately there is the mistaken notion in modern India that the word Vedanta has reference only to the Advaita system; but you must always remember that in modern India the three Prasthanas are considered equally important in the study of all the systems of religion. First of all there are the Revelations, the *Shrutis*, by which we mean the Upanishads. Secondly, among our philosophies, the Sutras of Vyasa have the greatest prominence on account of their being the consummation of all the preceding systems of philosophy.

These systems are not contradictory to one another, but one is based on another, and there is a gradual unfolding of the theme which culminates in the Sutras of Vyasa. Then, between the Upanishads and the Sutras, which are the systematising of the marvellous truths of the Vedanta, comes in the Gita, the divine commentary of the Vedanta.

The Upanishads, the Vyasa-*Sutras*, and the *Gita*, therefore, have been taken up by every sect in India that wants to claim authority for orthodoxy, whether dualist, or *Vishishtadvaitist*, or *Advaitist*; the authorities of each of these are the three Prasthanas. We find that a Shankaracharya, or a Ramanuja, or a Madhvacharya, or a Vallabhacharya, or a Chaitanya—any one who wanted to propound a new sect—had to take up these three systems and write only a new commentary on them.

Therefore it would be wrong to confine the word Vedanta only to one system which has arisen out of the Upanishads. All these are covered by the word Vedanta. The Vishishtadvaitist has as much right to be called a Vedantist as the Advaitist; in fact we will go a little further and say that what we really mean by the word Hindu is really the same as Vedantist. We want you to note that these three systems have been current in India almost from time immemorial; for you must not believe that Shankara was the inventor of the Advaita system.

It existed ages before Shankara was born; he was one of its last representatives. So with the Vishishtadvaita system; it had existed ages before Ramanuja appeared, as we already know from the commentaries he has written; so with the dualistic systems that have existed side by side with the others. And with my little knowledge, we have come to the conclusion that they do not contradict each other.

Just as in the case of the six Darshanas, we find they are a gradual unfolding of the grand principles whose music beginning far back in the soft low notes, ends in the triumphant blast of the Advaita, so also in these three systems we find the gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals till everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system. Therefore these three

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are not contradictory. On the other hand we are bound to tell you that this has been a mistake committed by not a few. We find that an Advaitist teacher keeps intact those texts which especially teach Advaitism, and tries to interpret the dualistic or qualified non-dualistic texts into his own meaning.

Similarly we find dualistic teachers trying to read their dualistic meaning into Advaitic texts. Our Gurus were great men, yet there is a saying, "Even the faults of a Guru must be told". I am of opinion that in this only they were mistaken. We need not go into text-torturing, we need not go into any sort of religious dishonesty, we need not go into any sort of grammatical twaddle, we need not go about trying to put our own ideas into texts which were never meant for them, but the work is plain and becomes easier, once you understand the marvellous doctrine of *Adhikarabheda*.

It is true that the Upanishads have this one theme before them: "What is that knowing which we know everything else?" In modern language, the theme of the Upanishads is to find an ultimate unity of things. Knowledge is nothing but finding unity in the midst of diversity. Every science is based upon this; all human knowledge is based upon the finding of unity in the midst of diversity; and if it is the task of small fragments of human knowledge, which we call our sciences, to find unity in the midst of a few different phenomena, the task becomes stupendous when the theme before us is to find unity in the midst of this marvellously diversified universe, where prevail unnumbered differences in name and form, in matter and spirit—each thought differing from every other thought, each form differing from every other form.

Yet, to harmonise these many planes and unending *Lokas*, in the midst of this infinite variety to find unity, is the theme of the Upanishads. On the other hand, the old idea of *Arundhati Nyaya* applies. To show a man the fine star Arundhati, one takes the big and brilliant nearest to it, upon which he is asked to fix his eyes first, and then it becomes quite easy to direct his sight to Arundhati. This is the task before us, and to prove my idea I have simply to show you the Upanishads, and you will see it. Nearly every chapter begins with dualistic teaching, Upasana.

God is first taught as some one who is the Creator of this universe, its Preserver, and unto whom everything goes at last. He is one to be worshipped, the Ruler, the Guide of nature, external and internal, yet appearing as if He were outside of nature and external. One step further, and we find the same teacher teaching that this God is not outside of nature, but immanent in nature. And at last both ideas are discarded, and whatever is real is He; there is no difference. "Svetaketu, That thou art." That Immanent One is at last declared to be the same that is in the human soul. Here is no compromise; here is no fear of others' opinions. Truth, bold truth, has been taught in bold language, and we need not fear to preach the truth in the same bold language today, and, by the grace of God, we hope at least to be one who dares to be that bold preacher.

To go back to our preliminaries. There are first two things to be understood—one, the psychological aspect common to all the Vedantic schools, and the other, the cosmological

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aspect. We will first take up the latter. Today we find wonderful discoveries of modern science coming upon us like bolts from the blue, opening our eyes to marvels we never dreamt of.

But many of these are only re-discoveries of what had been found ages ago. It was only the other day that modern science found that even in the midst of the variety of forces there is unity. It has just discovered that what it calls heat, magnetism, electricity, and so forth, are all convertible into one unit force, and as such, it expresses all these by one name, whatever you may choose to call it.

But this has been done even in the Samhita; old and ancient as it is, in it we meet with this very idea of force we were referring to. All the forces, whether you call them gravitation, or attraction, or repulsion, whether expressing themselves as heat, or electricity, or magnetism, are nothing but the variations of that unit energy. Whether they express themselves as thought, reflected from *Antahkarana*, the inner organs of man, or as action from an external organ, the unit from which they spring is what is called Prana. Again, what is Prana? Prana is Spandana or vibration.

When all this universe shall have resolved back into its primal state, what becomes of this infinite force? Do they think that it becomes extinct? Of course not. If it became extinct, what would be the cause of the next wave, because the motion is going in wave forms, rising, falling, rising again, falling again? Here is the word Srishti, which expresses the universe. Mark that the word does not mean creation. I am helpless in talking English; I have to translate the Sanskrit words as best as I can.

It is Srishti, projection. At the end of a cycle, everything becomes finer and finer and is resolved back into the primal state from which it sprang, and there it remains for a time quiescent, ready to spring forth again. That is Srishti, projection. And what becomes of all these forces, the Pranas? They are resolved back into the primal Prana, and this Prana becomes almost motionless—not entirely motionless; and that is what is described in the Vedic Sukta: "It vibrated without vibrations"—*Anidavatam*. There are many technical phrases in the Upanishads difficult to understand.

For instance, take this word Vata; many times it means air and many times motion, and often people confuse one with the other. We must guard against that. And what becomes of what you call matter? The forces permeate all matter; they all dissolve into *Akasha*, from which they again come out; this *Akasha* is the primal matter. Whether you translate it as ether or anything else, the idea is that this *Akasha* is the primal form of matter. This *Akasha* vibrates under the action of Prana, and when the next *Srishti* is coming up, as the vibration becomes quicker, the *Akasha* is lashed into all these wave forms which we call suns, moons, and systems.

We read again: "Everything in this universe has been projected, Prana vibrating." You must mark the word Ejati, because it comes from *Eja*—to vibrate. *Nihsritam*—projected. *Yadidam Kincha*—whatever in this universe.

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This is a part of the cosmological side. There are many details working into it. For instance, how the process takes place, how there is first ether, and how from the ether come other things, how that ether begins to vibrate, and from that Vayu comes. But the one idea is here that it is from the finer that the grosser has come. Gross matter is the last to emerge and the most external, and this gross matter had the finer matter before it. Yet we see that the whole thing has been resolved into two, but there is not yet a final unity. There is the unity of force, Prana; there is the unity of matter, called *Akasha*. Is there any unity to be found among them again? Can they be melted into one? Our modern science is mute here, it has not yet found its way out; and if it is doing so, just as it has been slowly finding the same old Prana and the same ancient *Akasha*, it will have to move along the same lines.

The next unity is the omnipresent impersonal Being known by its old mythological name as Brahma, the four-headed Brahma, and psychologically called *Mahat*. This is where the two unite. What is called your mind is only a bit of this *Mahat* caught in the trap of the brain, and the sum total of all minds caught in the meshes of brains is what you call *Samashti*, the aggregate, the universal. Analysis had to go further; it was not yet complete. Here we were each one of us, as it were, a microcosm, and the world taken altogether is the macrocosm. But whatever is in the Vyashti, the particular, we may safely conjecture that a similar thing is happening also outside. If we had the power to analyse our own minds, we might safely conjecture that the same thing is happening in the cosmic mind. What is this mind is the question.

In modern times, in Western countries, as physical science is making rapid progress, as physiology is step by step conquering stronghold after stronghold of old religions, the Western people do not know where to stand, because to their great despair, modern physiology at every step has identified the mind with the brain. But we in India have known that always. That is the first proposition the Hindu boy learns that the mind is matter, only finer. The body is gross, and behind the body is what we call the Sukshma Sharira, the fine body, or mind. This is also material, only finer; and it is not the *Atman*.

I will not translate this word to you in English, because the idea does not exist in Europe; it is untranslatable. The modern attempt of German philosophers is to translate the word *Atman* by the word "Self", and until that word is universally accepted, it is impossible to use it. So, call it as Self or anything, it is our *Atman*. This *Atman* is the real man behind. It is the *Atman* that uses the material mind as its instrument, its *Antahkarana*, as is the psychological term for the mind. And the mind by means of a series of internal organs works the visible organs of the body. What is this mind?

It was only the other day that Western philosophers have come to know that the eyes are not the real organs of vision, but that behind these are other organs, the Indriyas, and if these are destroyed, a man may have a thousand eyes, like Indra, but there will be no sight for him. Ay, your philosophy starts with this assumption that by vision is not meant the external vision.

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The real vision belongs to the internal organs, the brain-centres inside. You may call them what you like, but it is not that the Indriyas are the eyes, or the nose, or the ears. And the sum total of all these Indriyas plus the *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chitta*, *Ahamkara*, etc., is what is called the mind, and if the modern physiologist comes to tell you that the brain is what is called the mind, and that the brain is formed of so many organs, you need not be afraid at all; tell him that your philosophers knew it always; it is one of the very first principles of your religion.

Well then, we have to understand now what is meant by this *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chitta*, *Ahamkara*, etc. First of all, let us take *Chitta*. It is the mind-stuff—a part of the *Mahat*—it is the generic name for the mind itself, including all its various states. Suppose on a summer evening, there is a lake, smooth and calm, without a ripple on its surface. And suppose some one throws a stone into this lake.

What happens? First there is the action, the blow given to the water; next the water rises and sends a reaction towards the stone, and that reaction takes the form of a wave. First the water vibrates a little, and immediately sends back a reaction in the form of a wave. The *Chitta* let us compare to this lake, and the external objects are like the stones thrown into it. As soon as it comes in contact with any external object by means of these Indriyas—the Indriyas must be there to carry these external objects inside—there is a vibration, what is called *Manas*, indecisive. Next there is a reaction, the determinative faculty, *Buddhi*, and along with this *Buddhi* flashes the idea of Aham and the external object. Suppose there is a mosquito sitting upon my hand.

This sensation is carried to my *Chitta* and it vibrates a little; this is the psychological *Manas*. Then there is a reaction, and immediately comes the idea that I have a mosquito on my hand and that I shall have to drive it off. Thus these stones are thrown into the lake, but in the case of the lake every blow that comes to it is from the external world, while in the case of the lake of the mind, the blows may either come from the external world or the internal world. This whole series is what is called the *Antahkarana*.

Along with it, you ought to understand one thing more that will help us in understanding the Advaita system later on. It is this. All of you must have seen pearls and most of you know how pearls are formed. A grain of sand enters into the shell of a pearl oyster, and sets up an irritation there, and the oyster's body reacts towards the irritation and covers the little particle with its own juice. That crystallises and forms the pearl. So the whole universe is like that, it is the pearl which is being formed by us. What we get from the external world is simply the blow. Even to be conscious of that blow we have to react, and as soon as we react, we really project a portion of our own mind towards the blow, and when we come to know of it, it is really our own mind as it has been shaped by the blow.

Therefore it is clear even to those who want to believe in a hard and fast realism of an external world, which they cannot but admit in these days of physiology—that supposing

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we represent the external world by "x", what we really know is "x" plus mind, and this mind-element is so great that it has covered the whole of that "x" which has remained unknown and unknowable throughout; and, therefore, if there is an external world, it is always unknown and unknowable. What we know of it is as it is moulded, formed, fashioned by our own mind.

So with the internal world. The same applies to our own soul, the *Atman*. In order to know the *Atman* we shall have to know It through the mind; and, therefore, what little we know of this *Atman* is simply the *Atman* plus the mind. That is to say, the *Atman* covered over, fashioned, and moulded by the mind, and nothing more. We shall return to this a little later, but we will remember what has been told here.

The next thing to understand is this. The question arose that this body is the name of one continuous stream of matter—every moment we are adding material to it, and every moment material is being thrown off by it—like a river continually flowing, vast masses of water always changing places; yet all the same, we take up the whole thing in imagination, and call it the same river. What do we call the river? Every moment the water is changing, the shore is changing, every moment the environment is changing, what is the river then?

It is the name of this series of changes. So with the mind. That is the great *Kshanika Vijnana Vada* doctrine, most difficult to understand, but most rigorously and logically worked out in the Buddhistic philosophy; and this arose in India in opposition to some part of the Vedanta. That had to be answered and we shall see later on how it could only be answered by Advaitism and by nothing else. We will see also how, in spite of people's curious notions about Advaitism, people's fright about Advaitism, it is the salvation of the world, because therein alone is to be found the reason of things. Dualism and other isms are very good as means of worship, very satisfying to the mind, and maybe, they have helped the mind onward; but if man wants to be rational and religious at the same time, Advaita is the one system in the world for him.

Well, now, we shall regard the mind as a similar river, continually filling itself at one end and emptying itself at the other end. Where is that unity which we call the *Atman*? The idea is this, that in spite of this continuous change in the body, and in spite of this continuous change in the mind, there is in us something that is unchangeable, which makes our ideas of things appear unchangeable. When rays of light coming from different quarters fall upon a screen, or a wall, or upon something that is not changeable, then and then alone it is possible for them to form a unity, then and then alone it is possible for them to form one complete whole.

Where is this unity in the human organs, falling upon which, as it were, the various ideas will come to unity and become one complete whole? This certainly cannot be the mind itself, seeing that it also changes. Therefore there must be something which is neither the body nor the mind, something which changes not, something permanent, upon

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which all our ideas, our sensations fall to form a unity and a complete whole; and this is the real soul, the *Atman* of man. And seeing that everything material, whether you call it fine matter, or mind, must be changeful, seeing that what you call gross matter, the external world, must also be changeful in comparison to that—this unchangeable something cannot be of material substance; therefore it is spiritual, that is to say, it is not matter—it is indestructible, unchangeable.

Next will come another question: Apart from those old arguments which only rise in the external world, the arguments in support of design—who created this external world, who created matter, etc.? The idea here is to know truth only from the inner nature of man, and the question arises just in the same way as it arose about the soul. Taking for granted that there is a soul, unchangeable, in each man, which is neither the mind nor the body, there is still a unity of idea among the souls, a unity of feeling, of sympathy. How is it possible that my soul can act upon your soul, where is the medium through which it can work, where is the medium through which it can act? How is it I can feel anything about your souls?

What is it that is in touch both with your soul and my soul? Therefore there is a metaphysical necessity of admitting another soul, for it must be a soul which acts in contact with all the different souls, and in and through matter—one Soul which covers and interpenetrates all the infinite number of souls in the world, in and through which they live, in and through which they sympathise, and love, and work for one another. And this universal Soul is Paramatman, the Lord God of the universe. Again, it follows that because the soul is not made of matter, since it is spiritual, it cannot obey the laws of matter, it cannot be judged by the laws of matter. It is, therefore, unconquerable, birthless, deathless, and changeless.

"This Self, weapons cannot pierce, nor fire can burn, water cannot wet, nor air can dry up. Changeless, all-pervading, unmoving, immovable, eternal is this Self of man." We learn according to the Gita and the Vedanta that this individual Self is also Vibhu, and according to Kapila, is omnipresent. Of course there are sects in India which hold that the Self is Anu, infinitely small; but what they mean is Anu in manifestation; its real nature is Vibhu, all-pervading.

There comes another idea, startling perhaps, yet a characteristically Indian idea, and if there is any idea that is common to all our sects, it is this. Therefore I beg you to pay attention to this one idea and to remember it, for this is the very foundation of everything that we have in India. The idea is this. You have heard of the doctrine of physical evolution preached in the Western world by the German and the English savants.

It tells us that the bodies of the different animals are really one; the differences that we see are but different expressions of the same series; that from the lowest worm to the highest and the most saintly man it is but one—the one changing into the other, and so on, going up and up, higher and higher, until it attains perfection. We had that idea also.

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Declares our Yogi Patanjali—One species—the Jati is species—changes into another species—evolution; Parinama means one thing changing into another, just as one species changes into another. Where do we differ from the Europeans? Patanjali says, "*Prakrityapurat*," by the infilling of nature.

The European says, it is competition, natural and sexual selection, etc. that forces one body to take the form of another. But here is another idea, a still better analysis, going deeper into the thing and saying, "By the infilling of nature". What is meant by this infilling of nature? We admit that the amoeba goes higher and higher until it becomes a Buddha; we admit that, but we are at the same time as much certain that you cannot get an amount of work out of a machine unless you have put it in some shape or other. The sum total of the energy remains the same, whatever the forms it may take.

If you want a mass of energy at one end, you have got to put it in at the other end; it may be in another form, but the amount of energy that should be produced out of it must be the same. Therefore, if a Buddha is the one end of the change, the very amoeba must have been the Buddha also. If the Buddha is the evolved amoeba, the amoeba was the involved Buddha also. If this universe is the manifestation of an almost infinite amount of energy, when this universe was in a state of Pralaya, it must have represented the same amount of involved energy.

It cannot have been otherwise. As such, it follows that every soul is infinite. From the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the noblest and greatest saints, all have this infinite power, infinite purity, and infinite everything. Only the difference is in the degree of manifestation. The worm is only manifesting just a little bit of that energy, you have manifested more, another god-man has manifested still more: that is all the difference. But that infinite power is there all the same. Says Patanjali: "Like the peasant irrigating his field."

Through a little corner of his field he brings water from a reservoir somewhere, and perhaps he has got a little lock that prevents the water from rushing into his field. When he wants water, he has simply to open the lock, and in rushes the water of its own power. The power has not to be added, it is already there in the reservoir. So every one of us, every being, has as his own background such a reservoir of strength, infinite power, infinite purity, infinite bliss, and existence infinite—only these locks, these bodies, are hindering us from expressing what we really are to the fullest.

And as these bodies become more and more finely organised, as the Tamoguna becomes the Rajoguna, and as the Rajoguna becomes *Sattvaguna*, more and more of this power and purity becomes manifest, and therefore it is that our people have been so careful about eating and drinking, and the food question. It may be that the original ideas have been lost, just as with our marriage—which, though not belonging to the subject, I may take as an example. If we have another opportunity we will talk to you about these; but let me tell you now that the ideas behind our marriage system are the only ideas through

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which there can be a real civilisation. There cannot be anything else. If a man or a woman were allowed the freedom to take up any woman or man as wife or husband, if individual pleasure, satisfaction of animal instincts, were to be allowed to run loose in society, the result must be evil, evil children, wicked and demoniacal. The, man in every country is, on the one hand, producing these brutal children, and on the other hand multiplying the police force to keep these brutes down. The question is not how to destroy evil that way, but how to prevent the very birth of evil.

And so long as you live in society your marriage certainly affects every member of it; and therefore society has the right to dictate whom you shall marry, and whom you shall not. And great ideas of this kind have been behind the system of marriage here, what they call the astrological Jati of the bride and bridegroom. And in passing we may remark that according to Manu a child who is born of lust is not an Aryan. The child whose very conception and whose death is according to the rules of the Vedas, such is an Aryan. Yes, and less of these Aryan children are being produced in every country, and the result is the mass of evil which we call Kali Yuga.

But we have lost all these ideals—it is true we cannot carry all these ideas to the fullest length now—it is perfectly true we have made almost a caricature of some of these great ideas. It is lamentably true that the fathers and mothers are not what they were in old times, neither is society so educated as it used to be, neither has society that love for individuals that it used to have. But, however faulty the working out may be, the principle is sound; and if its application has become defective, if one method has failed, take up the principle and work it out better; why kill the principle? The same applies to the food question. The work and details are bad, very bad indeed, but that does not hurt the principle. The principle is eternal and must be there. Work it out afresh and make a re-formed application.

This is the one great idea of the *Atman* which every one of our sects in India has to believe. Only, as we shall find, the dualists preach that this *Atman* by evil works becomes *Sankuchita*, *i.e.* all its powers and its nature become contracted, and by good works again that nature expands. And the Advaitist says that the *Atman* never expands nor contracts, but seems to do so. It appears to have become contracted. That is all the difference, but all have the one idea that our *Atman* has all the powers already, not that anything will come to it from outside, not that anything will drop into it from the skies. Mark you, your Vedas are not inspired, but expired, not that they came from anywhere outside, but they are the eternal laws living in every soul.

The Vedas are in the soul of the ant, in the soul of the god. The ant has only to evolve and get the body of a sage or a Rishi, and the Vedas will come out, eternal laws expressing themselves. This is the one great idea to understand that our power is already ours, our salvation is already within us. Say either that it has become contracted, or say that it has been covered with the veil of Maya, it matters little; the idea is there already; you must have to believe in that, believe in the possibility of everybody—that even in the

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lowest man there is the same possibility as in the Buddha. This is the doctrine of the *Atman*.

But now comes a tremendous fight. Here are the Buddhists, who equally analyse the body into a material stream and as equally analyse the mind into another. And as for this *Atman*, they state that it is unnecessary; so we need not assume the *Atman* at all. What use of a substance, and qualities adhering to the substance? We say, Gunas, qualities, and qualities alone. It is illogical to assume two causes where one will explain the whole thing. And the fight went on, and all the theories which held the doctrine of substance were thrown to the ground by the Buddhists. There was a break-up all along the line of those who held on to the doctrine of substance and qualities, that you have a soul, and I have a soul, and every one has a soul separate from the mind and body, and that each one is an individual.

So far we have seen that the idea of dualism is all right; for there is the body, there is then the fine body—the mind—there is this *Atman*, and in and through all the Atmans is that Paramatman, God. The difficulty is here that this *Atman* and Paramatman are both called substance, to which the mind and body and so-called substances adhere like so many qualities. Nobody has ever seen a substance, none can ever conceive; what is the use of thinking of this substance? Why not become a Kshanikavadin and say that whatever exists is this succession of mental currents and nothing more?

They do not adhere to each other, they do not form a unit, one is chasing the other, like waves in the ocean, never complete, never forming one unit-whole. Man is a succession of waves, and when one goes away it generates another, and the cessation of these wave-forms is what is called *Nirvana*. You see that dualism is mute before this; it is impossible that it can bring up any argument, and the dualistic God also cannot be retained here.

The idea of a God that is omnipresent, and yet is a person who creates without hands, and moves without feet, and so on, and who has created the universe as a *Kumbakara* (potter) creates a Ghata (pot), the Buddhist declares, is childish, and that if this is God, he is going to fight this God and not worship it. This universe is full of misery; if it is the work of a God, we are going to fight this God. And secondly, this God is illogical and impossible, as all of you are aware. We need not go into the defects of the "design theory", as all our *Kshanikas* have shown them full well; and so this Personal God fell to pieces.

Truth, and nothing but truth, is the watchword of the Advaitist. "Truth alone triumphs, and not untruth. Through truth alone the way to gods, Devayana, lies." Everybody marches forward under that banner; ay, but it is only to crush the weaker man's position by his own. You come with your dualistic idea of God to pick a quarrel with a poor man who is worshipping an image, and you think you are wonderfully rational, you can confound him; but if he turns round and shatters your own Personal God and calls that an imaginary ideal, where are you? You fall back on faith and so on, or raise the cry of atheism, the old cry of a weak man—whosoever defeats him is an atheist.

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If you are to be rational, be rational all along the line, and if not, allow others the same privilege which you ask for yourselves. How can you prove the existence of this God? On the other hand, it can be almost disproved. There is not a shadow of a proof as to His existence, and there are very strong arguments to the contrary. How will you prove His existence, with your God, and His Gunas, and an infinite number of souls which are substance, and each soul an individual?

In what are you an individual? You are not as a body, for you know today better than even the Buddhists of old knew that what may have been matter in the sun has just now become matter in you, and will go out and become matter in the plants; then where is your individuality, Mr. So-and-so? The same applies to the mind. Where is your individuality? You have one thought tonight and another tomorrow. You do not think the same way as you thought when you were a child; and old men do not think the same way as they did when they were young. Where is your individuality then? Do not say it is in consciousness, this *Ahamkara*, because this only covers a small part of your existence. While I am talking to you, all my organs are working and I am not conscious of it. If consciousness is the proof of existence they do not exist then, because I am not conscious of them. Where are you then with your Personal God theories? How can you prove such a God?

Again, the Buddhists will stand up and declare—not only is it illogical, but immoral, for it teaches man to be a coward and to seek assistance outside, and nobody can give him such help. Here is the universe, man made it; why then depend on an imaginary being outside whom nobody ever saw, or felt, or got help from? Why then do you make cowards of yourselves and teach your children that the highest state of man is to be like a dog, and go crawling before this imaginary being, saying that you are weak and impure, and that you are everything vile in this universe?

On the other hand, the Buddhists may urge not only that you tell a lie, but that you bring a tremendous amount of evil upon your children; for, mark you, this world is one of hypnotisation. Whatever you tell yourself, that you become. Almost the first words the great Buddha uttered were: "What you think, that you are; what you will think, that you will be." If this is true, do not teach yourself that you are nothing, ay, that you cannot do anything unless you are helped by somebody who does not live here, but sits above the clouds. The result will be that you will be more and more weakened every day. By constantly repeating, "we are very impure, Lord, make us pure", the result will be that you will hypnotise yourselves into all sorts of vices.

The Buddhists say that ninety per cent of these vices that you see in every society are on account of this idea of a Personal God; this is an awful idea of the human being that the end and aim of this expression of life, this wonderful expression of life, is to become like a dog. Says the Buddhist to the Vaishnava, if your ideal, your aim and goal is to go to the place called Vaikuntha where God lives, and there stand before Him with folded hands all through eternity, it is better to commit suicide than do that. The Buddhists may even urge that, that is why he is going to create annihilation, *Nirvana*, to escape this.

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I am putting these ideas before you as a Buddhist just for the time being, because nowadays all these Advaitic ideas are said to make you immoral, and I am trying to tell you how the other side looks. Let us face both sides boldly and bravely.

We have seen first of all that this cannot be proved, this idea of a Personal God creating the world; is there any child that can believe this today? Because a Kumbhara creates a Ghata, therefore a God created the world! If this is so, then your Kumbhara is God also; and if any one tells you that He acts without head and hands, you may take him to a lunatic asylum. Has ever your Personal God, the Creator of the world to whom you cry all your life, helped you—is the next challenge from modern science.

They will prove that any help you have had could have been got by your own exertions, and better still, you need not have spent your energy in that crying, you could have done it better without that weeping and crying. And we have seen that along with this idea of a Personal God comes tyranny and priest-craft. Tyranny and priest-craft have prevailed wherever this idea existed, and until the lie is knocked on the head, say the Buddhists, tyranny will not cease. So long as man thinks he has to cower before a supernatural being, so long there will be priests to claim rights and privileges and to make men cower before them, while these poor men will continue to ask some priest to act as interceder for them. You may do away with the Brahmin, but mark me, those who do so will put themselves in his place and will be worse, because the Brahmin has a certain amount of generosity in him, but these upstarts are always the worst of tyrannisers.

If a beggar gets wealth, he thinks the whole world is a bit of straw. So these priests there must be, so long as this Personal God idea persists, and it will be impossible to think of any great morality in society. Priestcraft and tyranny go hand in hand. Why was it invented? Because some strong men in old times got people into their hands and said, you must obey us or we will destroy you. That was the long and short of it. It is the idea of the thunderer who kills every one who does not obey him. Next the Buddhist says, you have been perfectly rational up to this point, that everything is the result of the law of Karma. You believe in an infinity of souls, and that souls are without birth or death, and this infinity of souls and the belief in the law of Karma are perfectly logical no doubt. There cannot be a cause without an effect, the present must have had its cause in the past and will have its effect in the future.

The Hindu says the Karma is Jada (inert) and not Chaitanya (Spirit), therefore some Chaitanya is necessary to bring this cause to fruition. Is it so, that Chaitanya is necessary to bring the plant to fruition? If I plant the seed and add water, no Chaitanya is necessary. You may say there was some original Chaitanya there, but the souls themselves were the Chaitanya, nothing else is necessary. If human souls have it too, what necessity is there for a God, as say the Jains, who, unlike the Buddhists, believe in souls and do not believe in God. Where are you logical, where are you moral? And when you criticise Advaitism and fear that it will make for immorality, just read a little of what has been done in India by dualistic sects.

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If there have been twenty thousand Advaitist blackguards, there have also been twenty thousand Dvaitist blackguards. Generally speaking, there will be more Dvaitist blackguards, because it takes a better type of mind to understand Advaitism, and Advaitists can scarcely be frightened into anything. What remains for you Hindus, then? There is no help for you out of the clutches of the Buddhists. You may quote the Vedas, but he does not believe in them. He will say, "My Tripitakas say otherwise, and they are without beginning or end, not even written by Buddha, for Buddha says he is only reciting them; they are eternal." And he adds, "Yours are wrong, ours are the true Vedas, yours are manufactured by the Brahmin priests, therefore out with them." How do you escape?

Here is the way to get out. Take up the first objection, the metaphysical one, that substance and qualities are different. Says the Advaitist, they are not. There is no difference between substance and qualities. You know the old illustration, how the rope is taken for the snake, and when you see the snake you do not see the rope at all, the rope has vanished. Dividing the thing into substance and quality is a metaphysical something in the brains of philosophers, for never can they be in effect outside. You see qualities if you are an ordinary man, and substance if you are a great Yogi, but you never see both at the same time.

So, Buddhists, your quarrel about substance and qualities has been but a miscalculation which does not stand on fact. But if substance is unqualified, there can only be one. If you take qualities off from the soul, and show that these qualities are in the mind really, superimposed on the soul, then there can never be two souls for it is qualification that makes the difference between one soul and another. How do you know that one soul is different from the other? Owing to certain differentiating marks, certain qualities. And where qualities do not exist, how can there be differentiation? Therefore there are not two souls, there is but One, and your Paramatman is unnecessary, it is this very soul. That One is called Paramatman, that very One is called Jivatman, and so on; and you dualists, such as the Sankhyas and others, who say that the soul is Vibhu, omnipresent, how can you make two infinites? There can be only one. What else? This One is the one Infinite *Atman*, everything else is its manifestation. There the Buddhist stops, but there it does not end.

The Advaitist position is not merely a weak one of criticism. The Advaitist criticises others when they come too near him, and just throws them away, that is all; but he propounds his own position. He is the only one that criticises, and does not stop with criticism and showing books. Here you are. You say the universe is a thing of continuous motion. In Vyashti (the finite) everything is moving; you are moving, the table is moving, motion everywhere; it is Samsara, continuous motion; it is Jagat. Therefore there cannot be an individuality in this Jagat, because individuality means that which does not change; there cannot be any changeful individuality, it is a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as individuality in this little world of ours, the Jagat. Thought and feeling, mind and body, men and animals and plants are in a continuous state of flux. But suppose you take the universe as a unit whole; can it change or move? Certainly not.

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Motion is possible in comparison with something which is a little less in motion or entirely motionless. The universe as a whole, therefore, is motionless, unchangeable. You are therefore, an individual then and then alone when you are the whole of it, when the realisation of "I am the universe" comes. That is why the Vedantist says that so long as there are two, fear does not cease. It is only when one does not see another, does not feel another, when it is all one—then alone fear ceases, then alone death vanishes, then alone Samsara vanishes. Advaita teaches us, therefore, that man is individual in being universal, and not in being particular.

You are immortal only when you are the whole. You are fearless and deathless only when you are the universe; and then that which you call the universe is the same as that you call God, the same that you call existence, the same that you call the whole. It is the one undivided Existence which is taken to be the manifold world which we see, as also others who are in the same state of mind as we. People who have done a little better Karma and get a better state of mind, when they die, look upon it as *Svarga* and see Indras and so forth. People still higher will see it, the very same thing, as Brahma-Loka, and the perfect ones will neither see the earth nor the heavens, nor any Loka at all. The universe will have vanished, and Brahman will be in its stead.

Can we know this Brahman? I have told you of the painting of the Infinite in the Samhita. Here we shall find another side shown, the infinite internal. That was the infinite of the muscles. Here we shall have the Infinite of thought. There the Infinite was attempted to be painted in language positive; here that language failed and the attempt has been to paint it in language negative. Here is this universe, and even admitting that it is Brahman, can we know it? No! No! You must understand this one thing again very clearly. Again and again this doubt will come to you: If this is Brahman, how can we know it? "By what can the knower be known?" How can the knower be known? The eyes see everything; can they see themselves? They cannot. The very fact of knowledge is a degradation. Children of the Aryans, you must remember this, for herein lies a big story. All the Western temptations that come to you, have their metaphysical basis on that one thing—there is nothing higher than sense-knowledge.

In the East, we say in our Vedas that this knowledge is lower than the thing itself, because it is always a limitation. When you want to know a thing, it immediately becomes limited by your mind. They say, refer back to that instance of the oyster making a pearl and see how knowledge is limitation, gathering a thing, bringing it into consciousness, and not knowing it as a whole. This is true about all knowledge, and can it be less so about the Infinite? Can you thus limit Him who is the substance of all knowledge, Him who is the Sakshi, the witness, without whom you cannot have any knowledge, Him who has no qualities, who is the Witness of the whole universe, the Witness in our own souls? How can you know Him? By what means can you bind Him up? Everything, the whole universe, is such a false attempt. This infinite *Atman* is, as it were, trying to see His own face, and all, from the lowest animals to the highest of gods, are like so many mirrors

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to reflect Himself in, and He is taking up still others, finding them insufficient, until in the human body He comes to know that it is the finite of the finite, all is finite, there cannot be any expression of the Infinite in the finite.

Then comes the retrograde march, and this is what is called renunciation, Vairagya. Back from the senses, back! Do not go to the senses is the watchword of Vairagya. This is the watchword of all morality, this is the watchword of all well-being; for you must remember that with us the universe begins in Tapasya, in renunciation, and as you go back and back, all the forms are being manifested before you, and they are left aside one after the other until you remain what you really are. This is Moksha or liberation.

This idea we have to understand: "How to know the knower?" The knower cannot be known, because if it were known, it will not be the knower. If you look at your eyes in a mirror, the reflection is no more your eyes, but something else, only a reflection. Then if this Soul, this Universal, Infinite Being which you are, is only a witness, what good is it? It cannot live, and move about, and enjoy the world, as we do. People cannot understand how the witness can enjoy. "Oh," they say, "you Hindus have become quiescent, and good for nothing, through this doctrine that you are witnesses!" First of all, it is only the witness that can enjoy. If there is a wrestling match, who enjoys it, those who take part in it, or those who are looking on—the outsiders? The more and more you are the witness of anything in life, the more you enjoy it. And this is Ananda; and, therefore, infinite bliss can only be yours when you have become the witness of this universe; then alone you are a Mukta Purusha. It is the witness alone that can work without any desire, without any idea of going to heaven, without any idea of blame, without any idea of praise. The witness alone enjoys, and none else.

Coming to the moral aspect, there is one thing between the metaphysical and the moral aspect of Advaitism; it is the theory of Maya. Everyone of these points in the Advaita system requires years to understand and months to explain. Therefore you will excuse me if I only just touch them en passant. This theory of Maya has been the most difficult thing to understand in all ages. Let me tell you in a few words that it is surely no theory, it is the combination of the three ideas *Desha-Kala-Nimitta*—space, time, and causation—and this time and space and cause have been further reduced into Nama-Rupa. Suppose there is a wave in the ocean.

The wave is distinct from the ocean only in its form and name, and this form and this name cannot have any separate existence from the wave; they exist only with the wave. The wave may subside, but the same amount of water remains, even if the name and form that were on the wave vanish for ever. So this Maya is what makes the difference between me and you, between all animals and man, between gods and men. In fact, it is this Maya that causes the *Atman* to be caught, as it were, in so many millions of beings, and these are distinguishable only through name and form. If you leave it alone, let name and form go, all this variety vanishes for ever, and you are what you really are. This is Maya.

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It is again no theory, but a statement of facts. When the realist states that this table exists, what he means is, that this table has an independent existence of its own, that it does not depend on the existence of anything else in the universe, and if this whole universe be destroyed and annihilated, this table will remain just as it is now. A little thought will show you that it cannot be so. Everything here in the sense-world is dependent and interdependent, relative and correlative, the existence of one depending on the other. There are three steps, therefore, in our knowledge of things; the first is that each thing is individual and separate from every other; and the next step is to find that there is a relation and correlation between all things; and the third is that there is only one thing which we see as many.

The first idea of God with the ignorant is that this God is somewhere outside the universe, that is to say, the conception of God is extremely human; He does just what a man does, only on a bigger and higher scale. And we have seen how that idea of God is proved in a few words to be unreasonable and insufficient. And the next idea is the idea of a power we see manifested everywhere. This is the real Personal God we get in the Chandi, but, mark me, not a God that you make the reservoir of all good qualities only. You cannot have two Gods, God and Satan; you must have only one and dare to call Him good and bad. Have only one and take the logical consequences. We read in the Chandi: "We salute Thee, O Divine Mother, who lives in every being as peace.

We salute Thee, O Divine Mother, who lives in all beings as purity." At the same time we must take the whole consequence of calling Him the All-formed. "All this is bliss, O Gargi; wherever there is bliss there is a portion of the Divine." You may use it how you like. In this light before me, you may give a poor man a hundred rupees, and another man may forge your name, but the light will be the same for both. This is the second stage. And the third is that God is neither outside nature nor inside nature, but God and nature and soul and universe are all convertible terms.

You never see two things; it is your metaphysical words that have deluded you. You assume that you are a body and have a soul, and that you are both together. How can that be? Try in your own mind. If there is a Yogi among you, he knows himself as Chaitanya, for him the body has vanished. An ordinary man thinks of himself as a body; the idea of spirit has vanished from him; but because the metaphysical ideas exist that man has a body and a soul and all these things, you think they are all simultaneously there. One thing at a time. Do not talk of God when you see matter; you see the effect and the effect alone, and the cause you cannot see, and the moment you can see the cause, the effect will have vanished. Where is the world then, and who has taken it off?

"One that is present always as consciousness, the bliss absolute, beyond all bounds, beyond all compare, beyond all qualities, ever-free, limitless as the sky, without parts, the absolute, the perfect—such a Brahman, O sage, O learned one, shines in the heart of the Jnani in Samadhi. (Vivekachudamani, 408)

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"Where all the changes of nature cease for ever, who is thought beyond all thoughts, who is equal to all yet having no equal, immeasurable, whom the Vedas declare, who is the essence in what we call our existence, the perfect—such a Brahman, O Sage, O learned one, shines in the heart of the Jnani in Samadhi. (Ibid.,409)

"Beyond all birth and death, the Infinite One, incomparable, like the whole universe deluged in water in Mahapralaya—water above, water beneath, water on all sides, and on the face of that water not a wave, not a ripple—silent and calm, all visions have died out, all fights and quarrels and the war of fools and saints have ceased for ever—such a Brahman, O sage, O learned one, shines in the heart of the Jnani in Samadhi." (Ibid., 410)

That also comes, and when that comes the world has vanished. We have seen then that this Brahman, this Reality is unknown and unknowable, not in the sense of the agnostic, but because to know Him would be a blasphemy, because you are He already. We have also seen that this Brahman is not this table and yet is this table. Take off the name and form, and whatever is reality is He. He is the reality in everything.

"Thou art the woman, thou the man, thou art the boy, and the girl as well, thou the old man supporting thyself on a stick, thou art all in all in the universe." That is the theme of Advaitism. A few words more. Herein lies, we find, the explanation of the essence of things. We have seen how here alone we can take a firm stand against all the onrush of logic and scientific knowledge. Here at least reason has a firm foundation, and, at the same time, the Indian Vedantist does not curse the preceding steps; he looks back and he blesses them, and he knows that they were true, only wrongly perceived, and wrongly stated.

They were the same truth, only seen through the glass of Maya, distorted it may be—yet truth, and nothing but truth. The same God whom the ignorant man saw outside nature, the same whom the little-knowing man saw as interpenetrating the universe, and the same whom the sage realises as his own Self, as the whole universe itself—all are One and the same Being, the same entity seen from different standpoints, seen through different glasses of Maya, perceived by different minds, and all the difference was caused by that. Not only so, but one view must lead to the other.

What is the difference between science and common knowledge? Go out into the streets in the dark, and if something unusual is happening there, ask one of the passers-by what is the cause of it. It is ten to one that he will tell you it is a ghost causing the phenomenon. He is always going after ghosts and spirits outside, because it is the nature of ignorance to seek for causes outside of effects. If a stone falls, it has been thrown by a devil or a ghost, says the ignorant man, but the scientific man says it is the law of nature, the law of gravitation.

What is the fight between science and religion everywhere? Religions are encumbered with such a mass of explanations which come from outside—one angel is in charge of the

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sun, another of the moon, and so on ad infinitum. Every change is caused by a spirit, the one common point of agreement being that they are all outside the thing. Science means that the cause of a thing is sought out by the nature of the thing itself. As step by step science is progressing, it has taken the explanation of natural phenomena out of the hands of spirits and angels. Because Advaitism has done likewise in spiritual matters, it is the most scientific religion. This universe has not been created by any extra-cosmic God, nor is it the work of any outside genius. It is self-creating, self-dissolving, self-manifesting, One Infinite Existence, the Brahman. *Tattvamasi Shvetaketo*—"That thou art, O Shvetaketu!"

Thus you see that this, and this alone, and none else, can be the only scientific religion. And with all the prattle about science that is going on daily at the present time in modern half-educated India, with all the talk about rationalism and reason that I hear every day, I expect that whole sects of you will come over and dare to be Advaitists, and dare to preach it to the world in the words of Buddha, "For the good of many, for the happiness of many." If you do not, I take you for cowards. If you cannot get over your cowardice, if your fear is your excuse, allow the same liberty to others, do not try to break up the poor idol-worshipper, do not call him a devil, do not go about preaching to every man that does not agree entirely with you. Know first, that you are cowards yourselves, and if society frightens you, if your own superstitions of the past frighten you so much, how much more will these superstitions frighten and bind down those who are ignorant? That is the Advaita position. Have mercy on others. Would to God that the whole world were Advaitists tomorrow, not only in theory, but in realisation. But if that cannot be, let us do the next best thing; let us take the ignorant by the hand, lead them always step by step just as they can go, and know that every step in all religious growth in India has been progressive. It is not from bad to good, but from good to better.

Something more has to be told about the moral relation. Our boys blithely talk nowadays; they learn from somebody—the Lord knows from whom—that Advaita makes people immoral, because if we are all one and all God, what need of morality will there be at all! In the first place, that is the argument of the brute, who can only be kept down by the whip. If you are such brutes, commit suicide rather than pass for human beings who have to kept down by the whip. If the whip is taken away, you will all be demons! You ought all to be killed if such is the case. There is no help for you; you must always be living under this whip and rod, and there is no salvation, no escape for you.

In the second place, Advaita and Advaita alone explains morality. Every religion preaches that the essence of all morality is to do good to others. And why? Be unselfish. And why should I? Some God has said it? He is not for me. Some texts have declared it? Let them; that is nothing to me; let them all tell it. And if they do, what is it to me? Each one for himself, and somebody take the hindermost—that is all the morality in the world, at least with many. What is the reason that I should be moral? You cannot explain it except when you come to know the truth as given in the Gita: "He who sees everyone

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in himself, and himself in everyone, thus seeing the same God living in all, he, the sage, no more kills the Self by the self." Know through Advaita that whomsoever you hurt, you hurt yourself; they are all you.

Whether you know it or not, through all hands you work, through all feet you move, you are the king enjoying in the palace, you are the beggar leading that miserable existence in the street; you are in the ignorant as well as in the learned, you are in the man who is weak, and you are in the strong; know this and be sympathetic. And that is why we must not hurt others. That is why I do not even care whether I have to starve, because there will be millions of mouths eating at the same time, and they are all mine. Therefore I should not care what becomes of me and mine, for the whole universe is mine, I am enjoying all the bliss at the same time; and who can kill me or the universe? Herein is morality. Here, in Advaita alone, is morality explained. The others teach it, but cannot give you its reason. Then, so far about explanation.

What is the gain? It is strength. Take off that veil of hypnotism which you have cast upon the world, send not out thoughts and words of weakness unto humanity. Know that all sins and all evils can be summed up in that one word, weakness. It is weakness that is the motive power in all evil doing; it is weakness that is the source of all selfishness; it is weakness that makes men injure others; it is weakness that makes them manifest what they are not in reality. Let them all know what they are; let them repeat day and night what they are. Soham. Let them suck it in with their mothers' milk, this idea of strength—I am He, I am He. This is to be heard first, etc. And then let them think of it, and out of that thought, out of that heart will proceed works such as the world has never seen. What has to be done? And, this Advaita is said by some to be impracticable; that is to say, it is not yet manifesting itself on the material plane. To a certain extent that is true, for remember the saying of the Vedas:

"Om, this is the Brahman; Om, this is the greatest reality; he who knows the secret of this Om, whatever he desires that he gets." Ay, therefore first know the secret of this Om, that you are the Om; know the secret of this *Tattvamasi*, and then and then alone whatever you want shall come to you. If you want to be great materially, believe that you are so. I may be a little bubble, and you may be a wave mountain-high, but know that for both of us the infinite ocean is the background, the infinite Brahman is our magazine of power and strength, and we can draw as much as we like, both of us, I the bubble and you the mountain-high wave. Believe, therefore, in yourselves. The secret of Advaita is: Believe in yourselves first, and then believe in anything else.

In the history of the world, you will find that only those nations that have believed in themselves have become great and strong. In the history of each nation, you will always find that only those individuals who have believed in themselves have become great and strong. Here, to India, came an Englishman who was only a clerk, and for want of funds and other reasons he twice tried to blow his brains out; and when he failed, he believed in himself, he believed that he was born to do great things; and that man became Lord

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Clive, the founder of the Empire. If he had believed the *Padres* and gone crawling all his life—"O Lord, I am weak, and I am low"—where would he have been? In a lunatic asylum. You also are made lunatics by these evil teachings. I have seen, all the world over, the bad effects of these weak teachings of humility destroying the human race. Our children are brought up in this way, and is it a wonder that they become semi-lunatics?

This is teaching on the practical side. Believe, therefore, in yourselves, and if you want material wealth, work it out; it will come to you. If you want to be intellectual, work it out on the intellectual plane, and intellectual giants you shall be. And if you want to attain to freedom, work it out on the spiritual plane, and free you shall be and shall enter into *Nirvana*, the Eternal Bliss. But one defect which lay in the Advaita was its being worked out so long on the spiritual plane only, and nowhere else; now the time has come when you have to make it practical.

It shall no more be a Rahasya, a secret, it shall no more live with monks in cave and forests, and in the Himalayas; it must come down to the daily, everyday life of the people; it shall be worked out in the palace of the king, in the cave of the recluse; it shall be worked out in the cottage of the poor, by the beggar in the street, everywhere; anywhere it can be worked out. Therefore do not fear whether you are a woman or a Shudra, for this religion is so great, says Lord Krishna, that even a little of it brings a great amount of good. Therefore, children of the Aryans, do not sit idle; awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached. The time has come when this Advaita is to be worked out practically. Let us bring it down from heaven unto the earth; this is the present dispensation. And, the voices of our forefathers of old are telling us to bring it down from heaven to the earth. Let your teachings permeate the world, till they have entered into every pore of society, till they have become the common property of everybody, till they have become part and parcel of our lives, till they have entered into our veins and tingle with every drop of blood there.

You may be astonished to hear that as practical Vedantists the Americans are better than we are. I used to stand on the seashore at New York and look at the immigrants coming from different countries—crushed, downtrodden, hopeless, unable to look a man in the face, with a little bundle of clothes as all their possession, and these all in rags; if they saw a policeman they were afraid and tried to get to the other side of the foot-path. And, mark you, in six months those very men were walking erect, well clothed, looking everybody in the face; and what made this wonderful difference? Say, this man comes from Armenia or somewhere else where he was crushed down beyond all recognition, where everybody told him he was a born slave and born to remain in a low state all his life, and where at the least move on his part he was trodden upon.

There everything told him, as it were, "Slave! you are a slave, remain so. Hopeless you were born, hopeless you must remain." Even the very air murmured round him, as it were, "There is no hope for you; hopeless and a slave you must remain", while the strong man crushed the life out of him. And when he landed in the streets of New York, he found

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a gentleman, well-dressed, shaking him by the hand; it made no difference that the one was in rags and the other well-clad. He went a step further and saw a restaurant, that there were gentlemen dining at a table, and he was asked to take a seat at the corner of the same table.

He went about and found a new life, that there was a place where he was a man among men. Perhaps he went to Washington, shook hands with the President of the United States, and perhaps there he saw men coming from distant villages, peasants, and ill-clad, all shaking hands with the President. Then the veil of Maya slipped away from him. He is Brahman, he who has been hypnotised into slavery and weakness is once more awake, and he rises up and finds himself a man in a world of men.

In this country of ours, the very birth-place of the Vedanta, our masses have been hypnotised for ages into that state. To touch them is pollution, to sit with them is pollution! Hopeless they were born, hopeless they must remain! And the result is that they have been sinking, sinking, sinking, and have come to the last stage to which a human being can come. For what country is there in the world where man has to sleep with the cattle? And for this, blame nobody else, do not commit the mistake of the ignorant. The effect is here and the cause is here too. We are to blame. Stand up, be bold, and take the blame on your own shoulders. Do not go about throwing mud at others; for all the faults you suffer from, you are the sole and only cause.

Young men of Lahore, understand this, therefore, this great sin, hereditary and national, is on our shoulders. There is no hope for us. You may make thousands of societies, twenty thousand political assemblages, fifty thousand institutions. These will be of no use until there is that sympathy, that love, that heart that thinks for all; until Buddha's heart comes once more into India, until the words of the Lord Krishna are brought to their practical use, there is no hope for us. You go on imitating the Europeans and their societies and their assemblages, but let me tell you a story, a fact that I saw with my own eyes.

A company of Burmans was taken over to London by some persons here, who turned out to be Eurasians. They exhibited these people in London, took all the money, and then took these Burmans over to the Continent, and left them there for good or evil. These poor people did not know a word of any European language, but the English Consul in Austria sent them over to London. They were helpless in London, without knowing anyone. But an English lady got to know of them, took these foreigners from Burma into her own house, gave them her own clothes, her bed, and everything, and then sent the news to the papers.

And, mark you, the next day the whole nation was, as it were, roused. Money poured in, and these people were helped out and sent back to Burma. On this sort of sympathy are based all their political and other institutions; it is the rock-foundation of love, for themselves at least. They may not love the world; and the Burmans may be their enemies, but in England, it goes without saying, there is this great love for their own people, for

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truth and justice and charity to the stranger at the door. Where is the heart here to build upon? No sooner do we start a little joint-stock company than we try to cheat each other, and the whole thing comes down with a crash. You talk of imitating the English and building up as big a nation as they are. But where are the foundations? Ours are only sand, and, therefore, the building comes down with a crash in no time.

Therefore, young men of Lahore, raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita, for on no other ground can you have that wonderful love until you see that the same Lord is present everywhere. Unfurl that banner of love! "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached." Arise, arise once more, for nothing can be done without renunciation. If you want to help others, your little self must go. In the words of the Christians—you cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. Have Vairagya. Your ancestors gave up the world for doing great things.

At the present time there are men who give up the world to help their own salvation. Throw away everything, even your own salvation, and go and help others. Ay, you are always talking bold words, but here is practical Vedanta before you. Give up this little life of yours. What matters it if you die of starvation—you and I and thousands like us—so long as this nation lives? The nation is sinking, the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads—those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink when they have been dying of thirst and while the perennial river of water was flowing past, the unnumbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in sight of plenty, the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita and whom we have hated with all our strength, the unnumbered millions for whom we have invented the doctrine of Lokachara (usage), to whom we have talked theoretically that we are all the same and all are one with the same Lord, without even an ounce of practice.

"Yet, my friends, it must be only in the mind and never in practice!" Wipe off this blot. "Arise and awake." What matters it if this little life goes? Everyone has to die, the saint or the sinner, the rich or the poor. The body never remains for anyone. Arise and awake and be perfectly sincere. Our insincerity in India is awful; what we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death. "Let the sages blame or let them praise, let Lakshmi come today or let her go away, let death come just now or in a hundred years; he indeed is the sage who does not make one false step from the right path." Arise and awake, for the time is passing and all our energies will be frittered away in vain talking. Arise and awake, let minor things, and quarrels over little details and fights over little doctrines be thrown aside, for here is the greatest of all works, here are the sinking millions. When the Mohammedans first came into India, what a great number of Hindus were here; but mark, how today they have dwindled down! Every day they will become less and less till they wholly disappear.

Let them disappear, but with them will disappear the marvellous ideas, of which, with all their defects and all their misrepresentations, they still stand as representatives. And with them will disappear this marvellous Advaita, the crest-jewel of all spiritual thought.

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Therefore, arise, awake, with your hands stretched out to protect the spirituality of the world. And first of all, work it out for your own country. What we want is not so much spirituality as a little of the bringing down of the Advaita into the material world.

First bread and then religion. We stuff them too much with religion, when the poor fellows have been starving. No dogmas will satisfy the cravings of hunger. There are two curses here: first our weakness, secondly, our hatred, our dried-up hearts. You may talk doctrines by the millions, you may have sects by the hundreds of millions; ay, but it is nothing until you have the heart to feel. Feel for them as your Veda teaches you, till you find they are parts of your own bodies, till you realise that you and they, the poor and the rich, the saint and the sinner, are all parts of One Infinite Whole, which you call Brahman.

Modern science and its sledge-hammer blows are pulverising the porcelain foundations of all dualistic religions everywhere. Not only here are the dualists torturing texts till they will extend no longer—for texts are not India-rubber—it is not only here that they are trying to get into the nooks and corners to protect themselves; it is still more so in Europe and America. And even there something of this idea will have to go from India. It has already got there. It will have to grow and increase and save their civilisations too. For in the West the old order of things is vanishing, giving way to a new order of things, which is the worship of gold, the worship of Mammon.

Thus this old crude system of religion was better than the modern system, namely—competition and gold. No nation, however strong, can stand on such foundations, and the history of the world tells us that all that had such foundations are dead and gone. In the first place we have to stop the incoming of such a wave in India. Therefore preach the Advaita to every one, so that religion may withstand the shock of modern science. Not only so, you will have to help others; your thought will help out Europe and America. But above all, let me once more remind you that here is need of practical work, and the first part of that is that you should go to the sinking millions of India, and take them by the hand, remembering the words of the Lord Krishna:

"Even in this life they have conquered relative existence whose minds are firm-fixed on the sameness of everything, for God is pure and the same to all; therefore, such are said to be living in God."

Practical Vedanta 1

A very renoun scholar and historian has presented his views and exkperience about the Vedanta in the following pages:

If we have to say something about the practical position of the Vedanta philosophy. As we have told you, theory is very good indeed, but how are we to carry it into practice? If it be absolutely impracticable, no theory is of any value whatever, except as intellectual gymnastics. The Vedanta, therefore, as a religion must be intensely practical. We must

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be able to carry it out in every part of our lives. And not only this, the fictitious differentiation between religion and the life of the world must vanish, for the Vedanta teaches oneness—one life throughout.

The ideals of religion must cover the whole field of life, they must enter into all our thoughts, and more and more into practice. We will enter gradually on the practical side as we proceed. But this series of lectures is intended to be a basis, and so we must first apply ourselves to theories and understand how they are worked out, proceeding from forest caves to busy streets and cities; and one peculiar feature we find is that many of these thoughts have been the outcome, not of retirement into forests, but have emanated from persons whom we expect to lead the busiest lives—from ruling monarchs.

Shvetaketu was the son of Aruni, a sage, most probably a recluse. He was brought up in the forest, but he went to the city of the Panchalas and appeared at the court of the king, Pravahana Jaivali. The king asked him, "Do you know how beings depart hence at death?" "No, sir." "Do you know how they return hither?" "No, sir." "Do you know the way of the fathers and the way of the gods?" "No, sir." Then the king asked other questions. *Shvetaketu* could not answer them. So the king told him that he knew nothing. The boy went back to his father, and the father admitted that he himself could not answer these questions. It was not that he was unwilling to answer these questions.

It was not that he was unwilling to teach the boy, but he did not know these things. So he went to the king and asked to be taught these secrets. The king said that these things had been hitherto known only among kings; the priests never knew them. He, however, proceeded to teach him what he desired to know. In various Upanishads we find that this Vedanta philosophy is not the outcome of meditation in the forests only, but that the very best parts of it were thought out and expressed by brains which were busiest in the everyday affairs of life. We cannot conceive any man busier than an absolute monarch, a man who is ruling over millions of people, and yet, some of these rulers were deep thinkers.

Everything goes to show that this philosophy must be very practical; and later on, when we come to the Bhagavad-Gita—most of you, perhaps, have read it, it is the best commentary we have on the Vedanta philosophy—curiously enough the scene is laid on the battlefield, where Krishna teaches this philosophy to Arjuna; and the doctrine which stands out luminously in every page of the Gita is intense activity, but in the midst of it, eternal calmness. This is the secret of work, to attain which is the goal of the Vedanta. Inactivity, as we understand it in the sense of passivity, certainly cannot be the goal. Were it so, then the walls around us would be the most intelligent; they are inactive. Clods of earth, stumps of trees, would be the greatest sages in the world; they are inactive. Nor does inactivity become activity when it is combined with passion. Real activity, which is the goal of Vedanta, is combined with eternal calmness, the calmness which cannot be ruffled, the balance of mind which is never disturbed, whatever happens. And we all know from our experience in life that that is the best attitude for work.

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I have been asked many times how we can work if we do not have the passion which we generally feel for work. I also thought in that way years ago, but as I am growing older, getting more experience, I find it is not true. The less passion there is, the better we work. The calmer we are, the better for us, and the more the amount of work we can do. When we let loose our feelings, we waste so much energy, shatter our nerves, disturb our minds, and accomplish very little work.

The energy which ought to have gone out as work is spent as mere feeling, which counts for nothing. It is only when the mind is very calm and collected that the whole of its energy is spent in doing good work. And if you read the lives of the great workers which the world has produced, you will find that they were wonderfully calm men. Nothing, as it were, could throw them off their balance. That is why the man who becomes angry never does a great amount of work, and the man whom nothing can make angry accomplishes so much. The man who gives way to anger, or hatred, or any other passion, cannot work; he only breaks himself to pieces, and does nothing practical. It is the calm, forgiving, equable, well-balanced mind that does the greatest amount of work.

The Vedanta preaches the ideal; and the ideal, as we know, is always far ahead of the real, of the practical, as we may call it. There are two tendencies in human nature: one to harmonise the ideal with the life, and the other to elevate the life to the ideal. It is a great thing to understand this, for the former tendency is the temptation of our lives. I think that I can only do a certain class of work. Most of it, perhaps, is bad; most of it, perhaps, has a motive power of passion behind it, anger, or greed, or selfishness. Now if any man comes to preach to me a certain ideal, the first step towards which is to give up selfishness, to give up self-enjoyment, I think that is impractical.

But when a man brings an ideal which can be reconciled with my selfishness, I am glad at once and jump at it. That is the ideal for me. As the word "orthodox" has been manipulated into various forms, so has been the word "practical". "My doxy is orthodoxy; your doxy is heterodoxy." So with practicality. What I think is practical, is to me the only practicality in the world. If I am a shopkeeper, I think shopkeeping the only practical pursuit in the world. If I am a thief, I think stealing is the best means of being practical; others are not practical. You see how we all use this word practical for things we like and can do.

Therefore I will ask you to understand that Vedanta, though it is intensely practical, is always so in the sense of the ideal. It does not preach an impossible ideal, however high it be, and it is high enough for an ideal. In one word, this ideal is that you are divine, "Thou art That". This is the essence of Vedanta; after all its ramifications and intellectual gymnastics, you know the human soul to be pure and omniscient, you see that such superstitions as birth and death would be entire nonsense when spoken of in connection with the soul. The soul was never born and will never die, and all these ideas that we are going to die and are afraid to die are mere superstitions. And all such ideas as that we can do this or cannot do that are superstitions. We can do everything.

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The Vedanta teaches men to have faith in themselves first. As certain religions of the world say that a man who does not believe in a Personal God outside of himself is an atheist, so the Vedanta says, a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist. Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what the Vedanta calls atheism. Tomany this is, no doubt, a terrible idea; and most of us think that this ideal can never be reached; but the Vedanta insists that it can be realised by every one. There is neither man nor woman or child, nor difference of race or sex, nor anything that stands as a bar to the realisation of the ideal, because Vedanta shows that it is realised already, it is already there.

All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark. Know that there is no darkness around us. Take the hands away and there is the light which was from the beginning. Darkness never existed, weakness never existed. We who are fools cry that we are weak; we who are fools cry that we are impure. Thus Vedanta not only insists that the ideal is practical, but that it has been so all the time; and this Ideal, this Reality, is our own nature. Everything else that you see is false, untrue. As soon as you say, "I am a little mortal being," you are saying something which is not true, you are giving the lie to yourselves, you are hypnotising yourselves into something vile and weak and wretched.

The Vedanta recognises no sin, it only recognises error. And the greatest error, says the Vedanta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power and you cannot do this and that. Every time you think in that way, you, as it were, rivet one more link in the chain that binds you down, you add one more layer of hypnotism on to your own soul. Therefore, whosoever thinks he is weak is wrong, whosoever thinks he is impure is wrong, and is throwing a bad thought into the world. This we must always bear in mind that in the Vedanta there is no attempt at reconciling the present life—the hypnotised life, this false life which we have assumed—with the ideal; but this false life must go, and the real life which is always existing must manifest itself, must shine out. No man becomes purer and purer, it is a matter of greater manifestation. The veil drops away, and the native purity of the soul begins to manifest itself. Everything is ours already—infinite purity, freedom, love, and power.

The Vedanta also says that not only can this be realised in the depths of forests or caves, but by men in all possible conditions of life. We have seen that the people who discovered these truths were neither living in caves nor forests, nor following the ordinary vocations of life, but men who, we have every reason to belive, led the busiest of lives, men who had to command armies, to sit on thrones, and look to the welfare of millions—and all these, in the days of absolute monarchy, and not as in these days when a king is to a great extent a mere figurehead. Yet they could find time to think out all these thoughts, to realise them, and to teach them to humanity.

How much more then should it be practical for us whose lives, compared with theirs, are lives of leisure? That we cannot realise them is a shame to us, seeing that we are

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comparatively free all the time, having very little to do. My requirements are as nothing compared with those of an ancient absolute monarch. My wants are as nothing compared with the demands of Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, commanding a huge army; and yet he could find time in the midst of the din and turmoil of battle to talk the highest philosophy and to carry it into his life also. Surely we ought to be able to do as much in this life of ours—comparatively free, easy, and comfortable.

Most of us here have more time than we think we have, if we really want to use it for good. With the amount of freedom we have we can attain to two hundred ideals in this life, if we will, but we must not degrade the ideal to the actual. One of the most insinuating things comes to us in the shape of persons who apologise for our mistakes and teach us how to make special excuses for all our foolish wants and foolish desires; and we think that their ideal is the only ideal we need have. But it is not so. The Vedanta teaches no such things. The actual should be reconciled to the ideal, the present life should be made to coincide with life eternal.

For you must always remember that the one central ideal of Vedanta is this oneness. There are no two in anything, no two lives, nor even two different kinds of life for the two worlds. You will find the Vedas speaking of heavens and things like that at first; but later on, when they come to the highest ideals of their philosophy, they brush away all these things. There is but one life, one world, one existence. Everything is that—One, the difference is in degree and not in kind. The Vedanta entirely denies such ideas as that animals are separate from men, and that they were made and created by God to be used for our food. Some people have been kind enough to start an anti-vivisection society. I asked a member, "Why do you think, my friend, that it is quite lawful to kill animals for food, and not to kill one or two for scientific experiments?" He replied, "Vivisection is most horrible, but animals have been given to us for food." Oneness includes all animals. If man's life is immortal, so also is the animal's. The difference is only in degree and not in kind.

The amoeba and I are the same, the difference is only in degree; and from the standpoint of the highest life, all these differences vanish. A man may see a great deal of difference between grass and a little tree, but if you mount very high, the grass and the biggest tree will appear much the same. So, from the standpoint of the highest ideal, the lowest animal and the highest man are the same. If you believe there is a God, the animals and the highest creatures must be the same. A God who is partial to his children called men, and cruel to his children called brute beasts, is worse than a demon. I would rather die a hundred times than worship such a God. My whole life would be a fight with such a God.

But there is no difference, and those who say there is, are irresponsible, heartless people who do not know. Here is a case of the word practical used in a wrong sense. I myself may not be a very strict vegetarian, but I understand the ideal. When I eat meat I know it is wrong. Even if I am bound to eat it under certain circumstances, I know it

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is cruel. I must not drag my ideal down to the actual and apologize for my weak conduct in this way. The ideal is not to eat flesh, not to injure any being, for all animals are my brothers. If you can think of them as your brothers, you have made a little headway towards the brotherhood of all souls, not to speak of the brotherhood of man! That is child's play. You generally find that this is not very acceptable to many, because it teaches them to give up the actual, and go higher up to the ideal. But if you bring out a theory which is reconciled with their present conduct, they regard it as entirely practical.

There is this strongly conservative tendency in human nature: we do not like to move one step forward. I think of mankind just as I read of persons who become frozen in snow; all such, they say, want to go to sleep, and if you try to drag them up, they say, "Let me sleep; it is so beautiful to sleep in the snow", and they die there in that sleep. So is our nature. That is what we are doing all our life, getting frozen from the feet upwards, and yet wanting to sleep. Therefore you must struggle towards the ideal, and if a man comes who wants to bring that ideal down to your level, and teach a religion that does not carry that highest ideal, do not listen to him. To me that is an impracticable religion.

But if a man teaches a religion which presents the highest ideal, I am ready for him. Beware when anyone is trying to apologize for sense vanities and sense weaknesses. If anyone wants to preach that way to us, poor, sense-bound clods of earth as we have made ourselves by following that teaching, we shall never progress. I have seen many of these things, I have had some experience of the world, and my country is the land where religious sects grow like mushrooms. Every year new sects arise. But one thing I have marked, that it is only those that never want to reconcile the man of flesh with the man of truth that make progress. Wherever there is this false idea of reconciling fleshly vanities with the highest ideals, of dragging down God to the level of man, there comes decay. Man should not be degraded to worldly slavery, but should be raised up to God.

At the same time, there is another side to the question. We must not look down with contempt on others. All of us are going towards the same goal. The difference between weakness and strength is one of degree; the difference between virtue and vice is one of degree; the difference between heaven and hell is one of degree; the difference between life and death is one of degree; all differences in this world are of degree, and not of kind, because oneness is the secret of everything.

All is One, which manifests itself, either as thought, or life, or soul, or body, and the difference is only in degree. As such, we have no right to look down with contempt upon those who are not developed exactly in the same degree as we are. Condemn none; if you can stretch out a helping hand, do so. If you cannot, fold your hands, bless your brother, and let them go their own way. Dragging down and condemning is not the way to work. Never is work accomplished in that way. We spend our energies in condemning others. Criticism and condemnation is a vain way of spending our energies, for in the long run we come to learn that all are seeing the same thing, are more or less approaching the same ideal, and that most of our differences are merely differences of expression.

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Take the idea of sin. I was telling you just now the Vedantic idea of it, and the other idea is that man is a sinner. They are practically the same, only the one takes the positive and the other the negative side. One shows to man his strength and the other his weakness. There may be weakness, says the Vedanta, but never mind, we want to grow. Disease was found out as soon as man was born. Everyone knows his disease; it requires no one to tell us what our diseases are.

But thinking all the time that we are diseased will not cure us—medicine is necessary. We may forget anything outside, we may try to become hypocrites to the external world, but in our heart of hearts we all know our weaknesses. But, says the Vedanta, being reminded of weakness does not help much; give strength, and strength does not come by thinking of weakness all the time. The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. Teach men of the strength that is already within them. Instead of telling them they are sinners, the Vedanta takes the opposite position, and says, "You are pure and perfect, and what you call sin does not belong to you." Sins are very low degrees of Self-manifestation; manifest your Self in a high degree. That is the one thing to remember; all of us can do that. Never say, "No", never say, "I cannot", for you are infinite. Even time and space are as nothing compared with your nature. You can do anything and everything, you are almighty.

These are the principles of ethics, but we shall now come down lower and work out the details. We shall see how this Vedanta can be carried into our everyday life, the city life, the country life, the national life, and the home life of every nation. For, if a religion cannot help man wherever he may be, wherever he stands, it is not of much use; it will remain only a theory for the chosen few. Religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help him in whatever condition he is, in servitude or in freedom, in the depths of degradation or on the heights of purity; everywhere, equally, it should be able to come to his aid. The principle of Vedanta, or the ideal of religion, or whatever you may call it, will be fulfilled by its capacity for performing this great function.

The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they were to be great, they became great.

Let a man go down as low as possible; there must come a time when out of sheer desperation he will take an upward curve and will learn to have faith in himself. But it is better for us that we should know it from the very first. Why should we have all these bitter experiences in order to gain faith in ourselves? We can see that all the difference between man and man is owing to the existence of non-existence of faith in himself. Faith in ourselves will do everything. I have experienced it in my own life, and

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am still doing so; and as I grow older that faith is becoming stronger and stronger. He is an atheist who does not believe in himself.

The old religion said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith, because the Vedanta, again, is the doctrine of oneness. It means faith in all, because you are all. Love for yourselves means love for all, love for animals, love for everything, for you are all one.

It is the great faith which will make the world better. I am sure of that. He is the highest man who can say with truth, "I know all about myself." Do you know how much energy, how many powers, how many forces are still lurking behind that frame of yours? What scientist has known all that is in man? Millions of years have passed since man first came here, and yet but one infinitesimal part of his powers has been manifested. Therefore, you must not say that you are weak. How do you know what possibilities lie behind that degradation on the surface? You know but little of that which is within you. For behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness.

"This *Atman* is first to be heard of." Hear day and night that you are that Soul. Repeat it to yourselves day and night till it enters into your very veins, till it tingles in every drop of blood, till it is in your flesh and bone. Let the whole body be full of that one ideal, "I am the birthless, the deathless, the blissful, the omniscient, the omnipotent, ever-glorious Soul." Think on it day and night; think on it till it becomes part and parcel of your life. Meditate upon it, and out of that will come work. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and out of the fullness of the heart the hand worketh also.

Action will come. Fill yourselves with the idea; whatever you do, think well on it. All your actions will be magnified, transformed, deified, by the very power of the thought. If matter is powerful, thought is omnipotent. Bring this thought to bear upon your life, fill yourselves with the thought of your almightiness, your majesty, and your glory. Would to God no superstitions had been put into your head! Would to God we had not been surrounded from our birth by all these superstitious influences and paralysing ideas of our weakness and vileness! Would to God that mankind had had an easier path through which to attain to the noblest and highest truths! But man had to pass through all this; do not make the path more diffcult for those who are coming after you.

These are sometimes terrible doctrines to teach. I know people who get frightened at these ideas, but for those who want to be practical, this is the first thing to learn. Never tell yourselves or others that you are weak.

Do good if you can, but do not injure the world. You know in your inmost heart that many of your limited ideas, this humbling of yourself and praying and weeping to imaginary beings are superstitions. Tell me one case where these prayers have been answered. All the answers that came were from your own hearts. You know there are no ghosts, but no sooner are you in the dark than you feel a little creepy sensation. That

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is so because in our childhood we have had all these fearful ideas put into our heads. But do not teach these things to others through fear of society and public opinion, through fear of incurring the hatred of friends, or for fear of losing cherished superstitions. Be masters of all these.

What is there to be taught more in religion than the oneness of the universe and faith in one's self? All the works of mankind for thousands of years past have been towards this one goal, and mankind is yet working it out. It is your turn now and you already know the truth. For it has been taught on all sides. Not only philosophy and psychology, but materialistic sciences have declared it. Where is the scientific man today who fears to acknowledge the truth of this oneness of the universe? Who is there who dares talk of many worlds? All these are superstitions. There is only one life and one world, and this one life and one world is appearing to us as manifold. This manifoldness is like a dream. When you dream one dream passes away and another comes. You do not live in your dreams. The dreams come one after another, scene after scene unfolds before you. So it is in this world of ninety per cent misery and ten per cent happiness.

Perhaps after a while it will appear as ninety per cent happiness, and we shall call it heaven, but a time comes to the sage when the whole thing vanishes, and this world appears as God Himself, and his own soul as God. It is not therefore that there are many worlds, it is not that there are many lives. All this manifoldness is the manifestation of that One. That One is manifesting Himself as many, as matter, spirit, mind, thought, and everything else. It is that One, manifesting Himself as many. Therefore the first step for us to take is to teach the truth to ourselves and to others.

Let the world resound with this ideal, and let superstitions vanish. Tell it to men who are weak and persist in telling it. You are the Pure One; awake and arise, O mighty one, this sleep does not become you. Awake and arise, it does not befit you. Think not that you are weak and miserable. Almighty, arise and awake, and manifest your own nature. It is not fitting that you think yourself a sinner. It is not fitting that you think yourself weak. Say that to the world, say it to yourselves, and see what a practical result comes, see how with an electric flash everything is manifested, how everything is changed. Tell that to mankind, and show them their power. Then we shall learn how to apply it in our daily lives.

To be able to use what we call *Viveka* (discrimination), to learn how in every moment of our lives, in every one of our actions, to discriminate between what is right and wrong, true and false, we shall have to know the test of truth, which is purity, oneness. Everything that makes for oneness is truth. Love is truth, and hatred is false, because hatred makes for multiplicity. It is hatred that separates man from man; therefore it is wrong and false. It is a disintegrating power; it separates and destroys.

Love binds, love makes for that oneness. You become one, the mother with the child, families with the city, the whole world becomes one with the animals. For love is Existence,

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God Himself; and all this is the manifestation of that One Love, more or less expressed. The difference is only in degree, but it is the manifestation of that One Love throughout. Therefore in all our actions we have to judge whether it is making for diversity or for oneness. If for diversity we have to give it up, but if it makes for oneness we are sure it is good. So with our thoughts; we have to decide whether they make for disintegration, multiplicity, or for oneness, binding soul to soul and bringing one influence to bear. If they do this, we will take them up, and if not, we will throw them off as criminal.

The whole idea of ethics is that it does not depend on anything unknowable, it does not teach anything unknown, but in the language of the Upanishad, "The God whom you worship as an unknown God, the same I preach unto thee." It is through the Self that you know anything. I see the chair; but to see the chair, I have first to perceive myself and then the chair. It is in and through the Self that the chair is perceived. It is in and through the Self that you are known to me, that the whole world is known to me; and therefore to say this Self is unknown is sheer nonsense. Take off the Self and the whole universe vanishes.

In and through the Self all knowledge comes. Therefore it is the best known of all. It is yourself, that which you call I. You may wonder how this I of me can be the I of you. You may wonder how this limited I can be the unlimited Infinite, but it is so. The limited is a mere fiction. The Infinite has been covered up, as it were, and a little of It is manifesting as the I. Limitation can never come upon the unlimited; it is a fiction. The Self is known, therefore, to every one of us—man, woman, or child—and even to animals. Without knowing Him we can neither live nor move, nor have our being; without knowing this Lord of all, we cannot breathe or live a second. The God of the Vedanta is the most known of all and is not the outcome of imagination.

If this is not preaching a practical God, how else could you teach a practical God? Where is there a more practical God than He whom I see before me—a God omnipresent, in every being, more real than our senses? For you are He, the Omnipresent God Almighty, the Soul of your souls, and if I say you are not, I tell an untruth. I know it, whether at all times I realise it or not. He is the Oneness, the Unity of all, the Reality of all life and all existence.

These ideas of the ethics of Vedanta have to be worked out in detail, and, therefore, you must have patience. As I have told you, we want to take the subject in detail and work it up thoroughly, to see how the ideas grow from very low ideals, and how the one great ideal of oneness has developed and become shaped into the universal love; and we ought to study these in order to avoid dangers. The world cannot find time to work it up from the lowest steps. But what is the use of our standing on higher steps if we cannot give the truth to others coming afterwards?

Therefore, it is better to study it in all its workings; and first, it is absolutely necessary to clear the intellectual portion, although we know that intellectuality is almost nothing;

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for it is the heart that is of most importance. It is through the heart that the Lord is seen, and not through the intellect. The intellect is only the street-cleaner, cleansing the path for us, a secondary worker, the policeman; but the policeman is not a positive necessity for the workings of society. He is only to stop disturbances, to check wrong-doing, and that is all the work required of the intellect. When you read intellectual books, you think when you have mastered them, "Bless the Lord that I am out of them", because the intellect is blind and cannot move of itself, it has neither hands nor feet.

It is feeling that works, that moves with speed infinitely superior to that of electricity or anything else. Do you feel?—that is the question. If you do, you will see the Lord. It is the feeling that you have today that will be intensified, deified, raised to the highest platform, until it feels everything, the oneness in everything, till it feels God in itself and in others. The intellect can never do that. "Different methods of speaking words, different methods of explaining the texts of books, these are for the enjoyment of the learned, not for the salvation of the soul" (*Vivekachudamani*, 58).

Those of you who have read Thomas a Kempis know how in every page he insists on this, and almost every holy man in the world has insisted on it. Intellect is necessary, for without it we fall into crude errors and make all sorts of mistakes. Intellect checks these; but beyond that, do not try to build anything upon it. It is an inactive, secondary help; the real help is feeling, love. Do you feel for others? If you do, you are growing in oneness. If you do not feel for others, you may be the most intellectual giant ever born, but you will be nothing; you are but dry intellect, and you will remain so. And if you feel, even if you cannot read any book and do not know any language, you are in the right way. The Lord is yours.

Do you not know from the history of the world where the power of the prophets lay? Where was it? In the intellect? Did any of them write a fine book on philosophy, on the most intricate rationals of logic? Not one of them. They only spoke a few words. Feel like Christ and you will be a Christ; feel like Buddha and you will be a Buddha. It is feeling that is the life, the strength, the vitality, without which no amount of intellectual activity can reach God. Intellect is like limbs without the power of locomotion. It is only when feeling enters and gives them motion that they move and work on others. That is so all over the world, and it is a thing which you must always remember. It is one of the most practical things in Vedantic morality, for it is the teaching of the Vedanta that you are all Prophets, and all must be Prophets. The book is not the proof of your conduct, but you are the proof of the book. How do you know that a book teaches truth? Because you are truth and feel it. That is what the Vedanta says. What is the proof of the Christs and Buddhas of the world? That you and I feel like them.

That is how you and I understand that they were true. Our prophet-soul is the proof of their prophet-soul. Your godhead is the proof of God Himself. If you are not a prophet, there never has been anything true of God. If you are not God, there never was any God, and never will be. This, says the Vedanta, is the ideal to follow. Every one of us will have

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to become a prophet, and you are that already. Only know it. Never think there is anything impossible for the soul. It is the greatest heresy to think so. If there is sin, this is the only sin—to say that you are weak, or others are weak.

Practical Vedanta 2

I will tell to you a very ancient story from the Chhandogya Upanishad, which tells how knowledge came to a boy. The form of the story is very crude, but we shall find that it contains a principle. A young boy said to his mother, "I am going to study the Vedas. Tell me the name of my father and my caste." The mother was not a married woman, and in India the child of a woman who has not been married is considered an outcast; he is not recognised by society and is not entitled to study the Vedas. So the poor mother said, "My child, I do not know your family name; I was in service, and served in different places; I do not know who your father is, but my name is Jabala and your name is Satyakama." The little child went to a sage and asked to be taken as a student. The sage asked him, "What is the name of your father, and what is your caste?" The boy repeated to him what he had heard from his mother. The sage at once said, "None but a Brahmin could speak such a damaging truth about himself. You are a Brahmin and I will teach you. You have not swerved from the truth." So he kept the boy with him and educated him.

This teacher gave Satyakama four hundred lean, weak cows to take care of, and sent him to the forest. There he went and lived for some time. The teacher had told him to come back when the herd would increase to the number of one thousand. After a few years, one day Satyakama heard a big bull in the herd saying to him, "We are a thousand now; take us back to your teacher. I will teach you a little of Brahman." "Say on, sir," said Satyakama. Then the bull said, "The East is a part of the Lord, so is the West, so is the South, so is the North.

The four cardinal points are the four parts of Brahman. Fire will also teach you something of Brahman." Fire was a great symbol in those days, and every student had to procure fire and make offerings. So on the following day, Satyakama started for his Guru's house, and when in the evening he had performed his oblation, and worshipped at the fire, and was sitting near it, he heard a voice come from the fire, "O Satyakama." "Speak, Lord," said Satyakama. (Perhaps you may remember a very similar story in the Old Testament, how Samuel heard a mysterious voice.) "O Satyakama, I am come to teach you a little of Brahman.

This earth is a portion of that Brahman. The sky and heaven are portions of it. The ocean is a part of that Brahman." Then the fire said that a certain bird would also teach him something. Satyakama continued his journey and on the next day when he had performed his evening sacrifice a swan came to him and said, "I will teach you something about Brahman. This fire which you worship, O Satyakama, is a part of that Brahman. The sun is a part, the moon is a part, the lightning is a part of that Brahman. A bird

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called Madgu will tell you more about it." The next evening that bird came, and a similar voice was heard by Satyakama, "I will tell you something about Brahman. Breath is a part of Brahman, sight is a part, hearing is a part, the mind is a part."

Then the boy arrived at his teacher's place and presented himself before him with due reverence. No sooner had the teacher seen this disciple than he remarked: "Satyakama, thy face shines like that of a knower of Brahman! Who then has taught thee?" "Beings other than men," replied Satyakama. "But I wish that you should teach me, sir. For I have heard from men like you that knowledge which is learnt from a Guru alone leads to the supreme good." Then the sage taught him the same knowledge which he had received from the gods. "And nothing was left out, yea, nothing was left out."

Now, apart from the allegories of what the bull, the fire, and the birds taught, we see the tendency of the thought and the direction in which it was going in those days. The great idea of which we here see the germ is that all these voices are inside ourselves. As we understand these truths better, we find that the voice is in our own heart, and the student understood that all the time he was hearing the truth; but his explanation was not correct.

He was interpreting the voice as coming from the external world, while all the time, it was within him. The second idea that we get is that of making the knowledge of the Brahman practical. The world is always seeking the practical possibilities of religion, and we find in these stories how it was becoming more and more practical every day. The truth was shown through everything with which the students were familiar. The fire they were worshipping was Brahman, the earth was a part of Brahman, and so on.

The next story belongs to Upakoshala Kamalayana, a disciple of this Satyakama, who went to be taught by him and dwelt with him for some time. Now Satyakama went away on a journey, and the student became very down-hearted; and when the teacher's wife came and asked him why he was not eating, the boy said, "I am too unhappy to eat." Then a voice came from the fire he was worshipping, saying "This life is Brahman, Brahman is the ether, and Brahman is happiness. Know Brahman." "I know, sir," the boy replied, "that life is Brahman, but that It is ether and happiness I do not know."

Then it explained that the two words ether and happiness signified one thing in reality, *viz* the sentient (pure intelligence) that resides in the heart. So, it taught him Brahman as life and as the ether in the heart. Then the fire taught him, "This earth, food, fire, and sun whom you worship, are forms of Brahman. The person that is seen in the sun, I am He. He who knows this and meditates on Him, all his sins vanish and he has long life and becomes happy. He who lives in the cardinal points, the moon, the stars, and the water, I am He. He who lives in this life, the ether, the heavens, and the lightning, I am He." Here too we see the same idea of practical religion.

The things which they were worshipping, such as the fire, the sun, the moon, and so forth, and the voice with which they were familiar, form the subject of the stories which

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explain them and give them a higher meaning. And this is the real, practical side of Vedanta. It does not destroy the world, but it explains it; it does not destroy the person, but explains him; it does not destroy the individuality, but explains it by showing the real individuality. It does not show that this world is vain and does not exist, but it says, "Understand what this world is, so that it may not hurt you."

The voice did not say to Upakoshala that the fire which he was worshipping, or the sun, or the moon, or the lightning, or anything else, was all wrong, but it showed him that the same spirit which was inside the sun, and the moon, and lightning, and the fire, and the earth, was in him, so that everything became transformed, as it were, in the eyes of Upakoshala. The fire which was merely a material fire before, in which to make oblations, assumed a new aspect and became the Lord. The earth became transformed, life became transformed, the sun, the moon, the stars, the lightning, everything became transformed and deified. Their real nature was known.

The theme of the Vedanta is to see the Lord in everything, to see things in their real nature, not as they appear to be. Then another lesson is taught in the Upanishads: "He who shines through the eyes is Brahman; He is the Beautiful One, He is the Shining One. He shines in all these worlds." A certain peculiar light, a commentator says, which comes to the pure man, is what is meant by the light in the eyes, and it is said that when a man is pure such a light will shine in his eyes, and that light belongs really to the Soul within, which is everywhere. It is the same light which shines in the planets, in the stars, and suns.

I will now read to you some other doctrine of these ancient Upanishads, about birth and death and so on. Perhaps it will interest you. Shvetaketu went to the king of the Panchalas, and the king asked him, "Do you know where people go when they die? Do you know how they come back? Do you know why the other world does not become full?" The boy replied that he did not know. Then he went to his father and asked him the same questions. The father said, "I do not know," and he went to the king. The king said that this knowledge was never known to the priests, it was only with the kings, and that was the reason why kings ruled the world. This man stayed with the king for some time, for the king said he would teach him. "The other world, O Gautama, is the fire. The sun is its fuel. The rays are the smoke. The day is the flame.

The moon is the embers. And the stars are the sparks. In this fire the gods pour libation of faith and from this libation king Soma is born." So on he goes. "You need not make oblation to that little fire: the whole world is that fire, and this oblation, this worship, is continually going on. The gods, and the angels, and everybody is worshipping it. Man is the greatest symbol of fire, the body of man." Here also we see the ideal becoming practical and Brahman is seen in everything. The principle that underlies all these stories is that invented symbolism may be good and helpful, but already better symbols exist than any we can invent. You may invent an image through which to worship God, but a better image already exists, the living man. You may build a temple in which to worship

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God, and that may be good, but a better one, a much higher one, already exists, the human body.

You remember that the Vedas have two parts, the ceremonial and the knowledge portions. In time ceremonials had multiplied and become so intricate that it was almost hopeless to disentangle them, and so in the Upanishads we find that the ceremonials are almost done away with, but gently, by explaining them. We see that in old times they had these oblations and sacrifices, then the philosophers came, and instead of snatching away the symbols from the hands of the ignorant, instead of taking the negative position, which we unfortunately find so general in modern reforms, they gave them something to take their place. "Here is the symbol of fire," they said. "Very good! But here is another symbol, the earth. What a grand, great symbol! Here is this little temple, but the whole universe is a temple; a man can worship anywhere. There are the peculiar figures that men draw on the earth, and there are the altars, but here is the greatest of altars, the living, conscious human body, and to worship at this altar is far higher than the worship of any dead symbols."

We now come to a peculiar doctrine. I do not understand much of it myself. If you can make something out of it, I will read it to you. When a man dies, who has by meditation purified himself and got knowledge, he first goes to light, then from light to day, from day to the light-half of the moon, from that to the six months when the sun goes to the north, from that to the year, from the year to the sun, from the sun to the moon, from the moon to the lightning, and when he comes to the sphere of lightning, he meets a person who is not human, and that person leads him to (the conditioned) Brahman. This is the way of the gods. When sages and wise persons die, they go that way and they do not return.

What is meant by this month and year, and all these things, no one understands clearly. Each one gives his own meaning, and some say it is all nonsense. What is meant by going to the world of the moon and of the sun, and this person who comes to help the soul after it has reached the sphere of lightning, no one knows. There is an idea among the Hindus that the moon is a place where life exists, and we shall see how life has come from there. Those that have not attained to knowledge, but have done good work in this life, first go, when they die, through smoke, then to night, then to the dark fifteen days, then to the six months when the sun goes to the south, and from that they go to the region of their forefathers, then to ether, then to the region of the moon, and there become the food of the gods, and later, are born as gods and live there so long as their good works will permit.

And when the effect of the good work has been finished, they come back to earth by the same route. They first become ether, and then air, and then smoke, and then mist, then cloud, and then fall upon the earth as raindrops; then they get into food, which is eaten up by human beings, and finally become their children. Those whose works have been very good take birth in good families, and those whose works have been bad take

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bad births, even in animal bodies. Animals are continually coming to and going from this earth. That is why the earth is neither full nor empty.

Several ideas we can get also from this, and later on, perhaps, we shall be able to understand it better, and we can speculate a little upon what it means. The last part which deals with how those who have been in heaven return, is clearer, perhaps, than the first part; but the whole idea seems to be this that there is no permanent heaven without realising God. Now some people who have not realised God, but have done good work in this world, with the view of enjoying the results, go, when they die, through this and that place, until they reach heaven, and there they are born in the same way as we are here, as children of the gods, and they live there as long as their good works will permit. Out of this comes one basic idea of the Vedanta that everything which has name and form is transient. This earth is transient, because it has name and form, and so the heavens must be transient, because there also name and form remain. A heaven which is eternal will be contradictory in terms, because everything that has name and form must begin in time, exist in time, and end in time. These are settled doctrines of the Vedanta, and as such the heavens are given up.

We have seen in the Samhita that the idea of heaven was that it was eternal, much the same as is prevalent among Mohammedans and Christians. The Mohammedans concretise it a little more. They say it is a place where there are gardens, beneath which rivers run. In the desert of Arabia water is very desirable, so the Mohammedan always conceives of his heaven as containing much water. I was born in a country where there are six months of rain every year. I should think of heaven, I suppose, as a dry place, and so also would the English people.

These heavens in the Samhita are eternal, and the departed have beautiful bodies and live with their forefathers, and are happy ever afterwards. There they meet with their parents, children, and other relatives, and lead very much the same sort of life as here, only much happier. All the difficulties and obstructions to happiness in this life have vanished, and only its good parts and enjoyments remain. But however comfortable mankind may consider this state of things, truth is one thing and comfort is another. There are cases where truth is not comfortable until we reach its climax. Human nature is very conservative. It does something, and having once done that, finds it hard to get out of it. The mind will not receive new thoughts, because they bring discomfort.

In the Upanishads, we see a tremendous departure made. It is declared that these heavens in which men live with the ancestors after death cannot be permanent, seeing that everything which has name and form must die.

If there are heavens with forms, these heavens must vanish in course of time; they may last millions of years, but there must come a time when they will have to go. With this idea came another that these souls must come back to earth, and that heavens are places where they enjoy the results of their good works, and after these effects are finished

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they come back into this earth life again. One thing is clear from this that mankind had a perception of the philosophy of causation even at the early time. Later on we shall see how our philosophers bring that out in the language of philosophy and logic, but here it is almost in the language of children. One thing you may remark in reading these books that it is all internal perception.

If you ask me if this can be practical, my answer is, it has been practical first, and philosophical next. You can see that first these things have been perceived and realised and then written. This world spoke to the early thinkers. Birds spoke to them, animals spoke to them, the sun and the moon spoke to them; and little by little they realised things, and got into the heart of nature. Not by cognition, not by the force of logic, not by picking the brains of others and making a big book, as is the fashion in modern times, not even as I do, by taking up one of their writings and making a long lecture, but by patient investigation and discovery they found out the truth.

Its essential method was practice, and so it must be always. Religion is ever a practical science, and there never was nor will be any theological religion. It is practice first, and knowledge afterwards. The idea that souls come back is already there. Those persons who do good work with the idea of a result, get it, but the result is not permanent. There we get the idea of causation very beautifully put forward, that the effect is only commensurate with the cause. As the cause is, so the effect will be. The cause being finite, the effect must be finite. If the cause is eternal the effect can be eternal, but all these causes, doing good work, and all other things, are only finite causes, and as such cannot produce infinite result.

We now come to the other side of the question. As there cannot be an eternal heaven, on the same grounds, there cannot be an eternal hell. Suppose I am a very wicked man, doing evil every minute of my life. Still, my whole life here, compared with my eternal life, is nothing. If there be an eternal punishment, it will mean that there is an infinite effect produced by a finite cause, which cannot be. If I do good all my life, I cannot have an infinite heaven; it would be making the same mistake. But there is a third course which applies to those who have known the Truth, to those who have realised it. This is the only way to get beyond this veil of Maya—to realise what Truth is; and the Upanishads indicate what is meant by realising the Truth.

It means recognising neither good nor bad, but knowing all as coming from the Self; Self is in everything. It means denying the universe; shutting your eyes to it; seeing the Lord in hell as well as in heaven; seeing the Lord in death as well as in life. This is the line of thought in the passage I have read to you; the earth is a symbol of the Lord, the sky is the Lord, the place we fill is the Lord, everything is Brahman. And this is to be seen, realised, not simply talked or thought about. We can see as its logical consequence that when the soul has realised that everything is full of the Lord, of Brahman, it will not care whether it goes to heaven, or hell, or anywhere else; whether it be born again on this earth or in heaven. These things have ceased to have any meaning to that soul,

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because every place is the same, every place is the temple of the Lord, every place has become holy and the presence of the Lord is all that it sees in heaven, or hell, or anywhere else. Neither good nor bad, neither life nor death—only the one infinite Brahman exists.

According to the Vedanta, when a man has arrived at that perception, he has become free, and he is the only man who is fit to live in this world. Others are not. The man who sees evil, how can he live in this world? His life is a mass of misery. The man who sees dangers, his life is a misery; the man who sees death, his life is a misery. That man alone can live in this world, he alone can say, "I enjoy this life, and I am happy in this life," who has seen the Truth, and the Truth in everything. By the by, I may tell you that the idea of hell does not occur in the Vedas anywhere. It comes with the Puranas much later. The worst punishment according to the Vedas is coming back to earth, having another chance in this world. From the very first we see the idea is taking the impersonal turn. The ideas of punishment and reward are very material, and they are only consonant with the idea of a human God, who loves one and hates another, just as we do. Punishment and reward are only admissible with the existence of such a God.

They had such a God in the Samhita, and there we find the idea of fear entering, but as soon as we come to the Upanishads, the idea of fear vanishes, and the impersonal idea takes its place. It is naturally the hardest thing for man to understand, this impersonal idea, for he is always clinging on to the person. Even people who are thought to be great thinkers get disgusted at the idea of the Impersonal God. But to me it seems so absurd to think of God as an embodied man. Which is the higher idea, a living God, or a dead God? A God whom nobody sees, nobody knows, or a God Known?

The Impersonal God is a living God, a principle. The difference between personal and impersonal is this, that the personal is only a man, and the impersonal idea is that He is the angel, the man, the animal, and yet something more which we cannot see, because impersonality includes all personalities, is the sum total of everything in the universe, and infinitely more besides. "As the one fire coming into the world is manifesting itself in so many forms, and yet is infinitely more besides," so is the Impersonal.

We want to worship a living God. I have seen nothing but God all my life, nor have you. To see this chair you first see God, and then the chair in and through Him. He is everywhere saying, "I am". The moment you feel "I am", you are conscious of Existence. Where shall we go to find God if we cannot see Him in our own hearts and in every living being? "Thou art the man, Thou art the woman, Thou art the girl, and Thou art the boy. Thou art the old man tottering with a stick.

Thou art the young man walking in the pride of his strength." Thou art all that exists, a wonderful living God who is the only fact in the universe. This seems to many to be a terrible contradiction to the traditional God who lives behind a veil somewhere and whom nobody ever sees. The priests only give us an assurance that if we follow them, listen to their admonitions, and walk in the way they mark out for us—then when we

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die, they will give us a passport to enable us to see the face of God! What are all these heaven ideas but simply modifications of this nonsensical priestcraft?

Of course the impersonal idea is very destructive; it takes away all trade from the priests, churches, and temples. In India there is a famine now, but there are temples in each one of which there are jewels worth a king's ransom! If the priests taught this Impersonal idea to the people, their occupation would be gone. Yet we have to teach it unselfishly, without priestcraft. You are God and so am I; who obeys whom? Who worships whom? You are the highest temple of God; I would rather worship you than any temple, image, or Bible. Why are some people so contradictory in their thought? They are like fish slipping through our fingers. They say they are hard-headed practical men. Very good. But what is more practical than worshipping here, worshipping you? I see you, feel you, and I know you are God. The Mohammedan says, there is no God but Allah. The Vedanta says, there is nothing that is not God. It may frighten many of you, but you will understand it by degrees.

The living God is within you, and yet you are building churches and temples and believing all sorts of imaginary nonsense. The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples. If I cannot worship in that, no other temple will be of any advantage. The moment I have realised God sitting in the temple of every human body, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him—that moment I am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes, and I am free.

This is the most practical of all worship. It has nothing to do with theorising and speculation. Yet it frightens many. They say it is not right. They go on theorising about old ideals told them by their grandfathers, that a God somewhere in heaven had told some one that he was God. Since that time we have only theories. This is practicality according to them, and our ideas are impractical! No doubt, the Vedanta says that each one must have his own path, but the path is not the goal.

The worship of a God in heaven and all these things are not bad, but they are only steps towards the Truth and not the Truth itself. They are good and beautiful, and some wonderful ideas are there, but the Vedanta says at every point, "My friend, Him whom you are worshipping as unknown, I worship as thee. He whom you are worshipping as unknown and are seeking for, throughout the universe, has been with you all the time. You are living through Him, and He is the Eternal Witness of the universe." "He whom all the Vedas worship, nay, more, He who is always present in the eternal 'I', He is existing, the whole universe exists. He is the light and life of the universe.

If the 'I' were not in you, you would not see the sun, everything would be a dark mass. He shining, you see the world."

One question is generally asked, and it is this that this may lead to a tremendous amount of difficulty. Everyone of us will think, "I am God, and whatever I do or think

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must be good, for God can do no evil." In the first place, even taking this danger of misinterpretation for granted, can it be proved that on the other side the same danger does not exist? They have been worshipping a God in heaven separate from them, and of whom they are much afraid. They have been born shaking with fear, and all their life they will go on shaking. Has the world been made much better by this?

Those who have understood and worshipped a Personal God, and those who have understood and worshipped an Impersonal God, on which side have been the great workers of the world—gigantic workers, gigantic moral powers? Certainly on the Impersonal. How can you expect morality to be developed through fear? It can never be. "Where one sees another, where one hears another, that is Maya. When one does not see another, when one does not hear another, when everything has become the *Atman*, who sees whom, who perceives whom?" It is all He, and all I, at the same time. The soul has become pure. Then, and then alone we understand what love is. Love cannot come through fear, its basis is freedom. When we really begin to love the world, then we understand what is meant by brotherhood or mankind, and not before.

So, it is not right to say that the Impersonal idea will lead to a tremendous amount of evil in the world, as if the other doctrine never lent itself to works of evil, as if it did not lead to sectarianism deluging the world with blood and causing men to tear each other to pieces. "My God is the greatest god, let us decide it by a free fight." That is the outcome of dualism all over the world. Come out into the broad open light of day, come out from the little narrow paths, for how can the infinite soul rest content to live and die in small ruts? Come out into the universe of Light. Everything in the universe is yours, stretch out your arms and embrace it with love. If you ever felt you wanted to do that, you have felt God.

You remember that passage in the sermon of Buddha, how he sent a thought of love towards the south, the north, the east, and the west, above and below, until the whole universe was filled with this love, so grand, great, and infinite. When you have that feeling, you have true personality. The whole universe is one person; let go the little things. Give up the small for the Infinite, give up small enjoyments for infinite bliss.

It is all yours, for the Impersonal includes the Personal. So God is Personal and Impersonal at the same time. And Man, the Infinite, Impersonal Man, is manifesting Himself as person. We the infinite have limited ourselves, as it were, into small parts. The Vedanta says that Infinity is our true nature; it will never vanish, it will abide for ever. But we are limiting ourselves by our Karma, which like a chain round our necks has dragged us into this limitation. Break that chain and be free. Trample law under your feet. There is no law in human nature, there is no destiny, no fate.

How can there be law in infinity? Freedom is its watchword. Freedom is its nature, its birth-right. Be free, and then have any number of personalities you like. Then we will play like the actor who comes upon the stage and plays the part of a beggar. Contrast

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him with the actual beggar walking in the streets. The scene is, perhaps, the same in both cases, the words are, perhaps, the same, but yet what difference! The one enjoys his beggary while the other is suffering misery from it. And what makes this difference? the one is free and the other is bound.

The actor knows his beggary is not true, but that he has assumed it for play, while the real beggar thinks that it is his too familiar state and that he has to bear it whether he wills it or not. This is the law. So long as we have no knowledge of our real nature, we are beggars, jostled about by every force in nature; and made slaves of by everything in nature; we cry all over the world for help, but help never comes to us; we cry to imaginary beings, and yet it never comes. But still we hope help will come, and thus in weeping, wailing, and hoping, one life is passed, and the same play goes on and on.

Be free; hope for nothing from anyone. I am sure if you look back upon your lives you will find that you were always vainly trying to get help from others which never came. All the help that has come was from within yourselves. You only had the fruits of what you yourselves worked for, and yet you were strangely hoping all the time for help. A rich man's parlour is always full; but if you notice, you do not find the same people there. The visitors are always hoping that they will get something from those wealthy men, but they never do.

So are our lives spent in hoping, hoping, hoping, which never comes to an end. Give up hope, says the Vedanta. Why should you hope? You have everything, nay, you are everything. What are you hoping for? If a king goes mad, and runs about trying to find the king of his country, he will never find him, because he is the king himself. He may go through every village and city in his own country, seeking in every house, weeping and wailing, but he will never find him, because he is the king himself. It is better that we know we are God and give up this fool's search after Him; and knowing that we are God we become happy and contented. Give up all these mad pursuits, and then play your part in the universe, as an actor on the stage.

The whole vision is changed, and instead of an eternal prison this world has become a playground; instead of a land of competition it is a land of bliss, where there is perpetual spring, flowers bloom and butterflies flit about.

This very world becomes heaven, which formerly was hell. To the eyes of the bound it is a tremendous place of torment, but to the eyes of the free it is quite otherwise. This one life is the universal life, heavens and all those places are here. All the gods are here, the prototypes of man. The gods did not create man after their type, but man created gods. And here are the prototypes, here is Indra, here is Varuna, and all the gods of the universe. We have been projecting our little doubles, and we are the originals of these gods, we are the real, the only gods to be worshipped.

This is the view of the Vedanta, and this its practicality. When we have become free, we need not go mad and throw up society and rush off to die in the forest or the cave;

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we shall remain where we were, only we shall understand the whole thing. The same phenomena will remain, but with a new meaning. We do not know the world yet; it is only through freedom that we see what it is, and understand its nature. We shall see then that this so-called law, or fate, or destiny occupies only an infinitesimal part of our nature.

It was only one side, but on the other side there was freedom all the time. We did not know this, and that is why we have been trying to save ourselves from evil by hiding our faces in the ground, like the hunted hare. Through delusion we have been trying to forget our nature, and yet we could not; it was always calling upon us, and all our search after God or gods, or external freedom, was a search after our real nature. We mistook the voice. We thought it was from the fire, or from a god or the sun, or moon, or stars, but at last we have found that it was from within ourselves. Within ourselves is this eternal voice speaking of eternal freedom; its music is eternally going on. Part of this music of the Soul has become the earth, the law, this universe, but it was always ours and always will be. In one word, the ideal of Vedanta is to know man as he really is, and this is its message, that if you cannot worship your brother man, the manifested God, how can you worship a God who is unmanifested?

Do you not remember what the Bible says, "If you cannot love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?" If you cannot see God in the human face, how can you see him in the clouds, or in images made of dull, dead matter, or in mere fictitious stories of our brain? I shall call you religious from the day you begin to see God in men and women, and then you will understand what is meant by turning the left cheek to the man who strikes you on the right. When you see man as God, everything, even the tiger, will be welcome. Whatever comes to you is but the Lord, the Eternal, the Blessed One, appearing to us in various forms, as our father, and mother, and friend, and child—they are our own soul playing with us.

As our human relationships can thus be made divine, so our relationship with God may take any of these forms and we can look upon Him as our father, or mother, or friend, or beloved. Calling God Mother is a higher ideal than calling Him Father; and to call Him Friend is still higher; but the highest is to regard Him as the Beloved. The highest point of all is to see no difference between lover and beloved. You may remember, perhaps, the old Persian story, of how a lover came and knocked at the door of the beloved and was asked, "Who are you?" He answered, "It is I", and there was no response. A second time he came, and exclaimed, "I am here", but the door was not opened. The third time he came, and the voice asked from inside, "Who is there?" He replied, "I am thyself, my beloved", and the door opened. So is the relation between God and ourselves. He is in everything. He is everything. Every man and woman is the palpable, blissful, living God. Who says God is unknown? Who says He is to be searched after?

We have found God eternally. We have been living in Him eternally; everywhere He is eternally known, eternally worshipped.

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Then comes another idea, that other forms of worship are not errors. This is one of the great points to be remembered, that those who worship God through ceremonials and forms, however crude we may think them to be, are not in error. It is the journey from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth. Darkness is less light; evil is less good; impurity is less purity. It must always be borne in mind that we should see others with eyes of love, with sympathy, knowing that they are going along the same path that we have trodden.

If you are free, you must know that all will be so sooner or later, and if you are free, how can you see the impermanent? If you are really pure, how do you see the impure? For what is within, is without. We cannot see impurity without having it inside ourselves. This is one of the practical sides of Vedanta, and I hope that we shall all try to carry it into our lives. Our whole life here is to carry this into practice, but the one great point we gain is that we shall work with satisfaction and contentment, instead of with discontent and dissatisfaction, for we know that Truth is within us, we have it as our birth-right, and we have only to manifest it, and make it tangible.

Practical Vedanta 3

In the Chhandogya Upanishad we read that a sage called Narada came to another called Sanatkumara, and asked him various questions, of which one was, if religion was the cause of things as they are. And Sanatkumara leads him, as it were, step by step, telling him that there is something higher than this earth, and something higher than that, and so on, till he comes to *Akasha*. Ether is higher than light, because in the ether are the sun and the moon, lightning and the stars; in ether we live, and in ether we die. Then the question arises, if there is anything higher than that, and Sanatkumara tells him of Prana. This Prana, according to the Vedanta, is the principle of life. It is like ether, an omnipresent principle; and all motion, either in the body or anywhere else, is the work of this Prana. It is greater than *Akasha*, and through it everything lives. Prana is in the mother, in the father, in the sister, in the teacher, Prana is the knower.

I will read another passage, where Shvetaketu asks his father about the Truth, and the father teaches him different things, and concludes by saying, "That which is the fine cause in all these things, of it are all these things made. That is the All, that is Truth, thou art That, O Shvetaketu." And then he gives various examples. "As a bee, O Shvetaketu, gathers honey from different flowers, and as the different honeys do not know that they are from various trees, and from various flowers, so all of us, having come to that Existence, know not that we have done so. Now, that which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self and thou, O Shvetaketu, are That." He gives another example of the rivers running down to the ocean. "As the rivers, when they are in the ocean, do not know that they have been various rivers, even so when we come out of that Existence, we do not know that we are That. O Shvetaketu, thou are That." So on he goes with his teachings.

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Now there are two principles of knowledge. The one principle is that we know by referring the particular to the general, and the general to the universal; and the second is that anything of which the explanation is sought is to be explained so far as possible from its own nature. Taking up the first principle, we see that all our knowledge really consists of classifications, going higher and higher. When something happens singly, we are, as it were, dissatisfied. When it can be shown that the same thing happens again and again, we are satisfied and call it law. When we find that one apple falls, we are dissatisfied; but when we find that all apples fall, we call it the law of gravitation and are satisfied. The fact is that from the particular we deduce the general.

When we want to study religion, we should apply this scientific process. The same principle also holds good here, and as a fact we find that that has been the method all through. In reading these books from which I have been translating to you, the earliest idea that I can trace is this principle of going from the particular to the general. We see how the "bright ones" became merged into one principle; and likewise in the ideas of the cosmos we find the ancient thinkers going higher and higher—from the fine elements they go to finer and more embracing elements, and from these particulars they come to one omnipresent and from that even they go to an all-embracing force, or Prana; and through all this runs the principle, that one is not separate from the others. It is the very ether that exists in the higher form of Prana, or the higher form of Prana concretes, so to say, and becomes ether; and that becomes still grosser, and so on.

The generalisation of the Personal God is another case in point. We have seen how this generalisation was reached, and was called the sum total of all consciousness. But a difficulty arises—it is an incomplete generalisation. We take up only one side of the facts of nature, the fact of consciousness, and upon that we generalise, but the other side is left out. So, in the first place it is a defective generalisation. There is another insufficiency, and that relates to the second principle. Everything should be explained from its own nature. There may have been people who thought that every apple that fell to the ground was dragged down by a ghost, but the explanation is the law of gravitation; and although we know it is not a perfect explanation, yet it is much better than the other, because it is derived from the nature of the thing itself, while the other posits an extraneous cause. So throughout the whole range of our knowledge; the explanation which is based upon the nature of the thing itself is a scientific explanation, and an explanation which brings in an outside agent is unscientific.

So the explanation of a Personal God as the creator of the universe has to stand that test. If that God is outside of nature, having nothing to do with nature, and this nature is the outcome of the command of that God and produced from nothing, it is a very unscientific theory, and this has been the weak point of every Theistic religion throughout the ages. These two defects we find in what is generally called the theory of monotheism, the theory of a Personal God, with all the qualities of a human being multiplied very much, who, by His will, created this universe out of nothing and yet is separate from it. This

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leads us into two difficulties. As we have seen, it is not a sufficient generalisation, and secondly, it is not an explanation of nature from nature. It holds that the effect is not the cause, that the cause is entirely separate from the effect. Yet all human knowledge shows that the effect is but the cause in another form. To this idea the discoveries of modern science are tending every day, and the latest theory that has been accepted on all sides is the theory of evolution, the principle of which is that the effect is but the cause in another form, a readjustment of the cause, and the cause takes the form of the effect. The theory of creation out of nothing would be laughed at by modern scientists.

Now, can religion stand these tests? If there be any religious theories which can stand these two tests, they will be acceptable to the modern mind, to the thinking mind. Any other theory which we ask the modern man to believe, on the authority of priests, or churches, or books, he is unable to accept, and the result is a hideous mass of unbelief. Even in those in whom there is an external display of belief, in their hearts there is a tremendous amount of unbelief. The rest shrink away from religion, as it were, give it up, regarding it as priestcraft only.

Religion has been reduced to a sort of national form. It is one of our very best social remnants; let it remain. But the real necessity which the grandfather of the modern man felt for it is gone; he no longer finds it satisfactory to his reason. The idea of such a Personal God, and such a creation, the idea which is generally known as monotheism in every religion, cannot hold its own any longer. In India it could not hold its own because of the Buddhists, and that was the very point where they gained their victory in ancient times. They showed that if we allow that nature is possessed of infinite power, and that nature can work out all its wants, it is simply unnecessary to insist that there is something besides nature. Even the soul is unnecessary.

The discussion about substance and qualities is very old, and you will sometimes find that the old superstition lives even at the present day. Most of you have read how, during the Middle Ages, and, I am sorry to say, even much later, this was one of the subjects of discussion, whether qualities adhered to substance, whether length, breadth, and thickness adhered to the substance which we call dead matter, whether, the substance remaining, the qualities are there or not. To this our Buddhist says, "You have no ground for maintaining the existence of such a substance; the qualities are all that exist; you do not see beyond them." This is just the position of most of our modern agnostics.

For it is this fight of the substance and qualities that, on a higher plane, takes the form of the fight between noumenon and phenomenon. There is the phenomenal world, the universe of continuous change, and there is something behind which does not change; and this duality of existence, noumenon and phenomenon, some hold, is true, and others with better reason claim that you have no right to admit the two, for what we see, feel, and think is only the phenomenon. You have no right to assert there is anything beyond phenomenon; and there is no answer to this.

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The cnly answer we get is from the monistic theory of the Vedanta. It is true that only one exists, and that one is either phenomenon or noumenon. It is not true that there are two—something changing, and, in and through that, something which does not change; but it is the one and the same thing which appears as changing, and which is in reality unchangeable. We have come to think of the body, and mind, and soul as many, but really there is only one; and that one is appearing in all these various forms.

Take the well-known illustration of the monists, the rope appearing as the snake. Some people, in the dark or through some other cause, mistake the rope for the snake, but when knowledge comes, the snake vanishes and it is found to be a rope. By this illustration we see that when the snake exists in the mind, the rope has vanished, and when the rope exists, the snake has gone.

When we see phenomenon, and phenomenon only, around us, the noumenon has vanished, but when we see the noumenon, the unchangeable, it naturally follows that the phenomenon has vanished. Now, we understand better the position of both the realist and the idealist. The realist sees the phenomenon only, and the idealist looks to the noumenon. For the idealist, the really genuine idealist, who has truly arrived at the power of perception, whereby he can get away from all ideas of change, for him the changeful universe has vanished, and he has the right to say it is all delusion, there is no change. The realist at the same time looks at the changeful. For him the unchangeable has vanished, and he has a right to say this is all real.

What is the outcome of this philosophy? It is that the idea of Personal God is not sufficient. We have to get to something higher, to the Impersonal idea. It is the only logical step that we can take. Not that the personal idea would be destroyed by that, not that we supply proof that the Personal God does not exist, but we must go to the Impersonal for the explanation of the personal, for the Impersonal is a much higher generalisation than the personal. The Impersonal only can be Infinite, the personal is limited.

Thus we preserve the personal and do not destroy it. Often the doubt comes to us that if we arrive at the idea of the Impersonal God, the personal will be destroyed, if we arrive at the idea of the Impersonal man, the personal will be lost. But the Vedantic idea is not the destruction of the individual, but its real preservation. We cannot prove the individual by any other means but by referring to the universal, by proving that this individual is really the universal. If we think of the individual as separate from everything else in the universe, it cannot stand a minute. Such a thing never existed.

Secondly, by the application of the second principle, that the explanation of everything must come out of the nature of the thing, we are led to a still bolder idea, and one more difficult to understand. It is nothing less than this, that the Impersonal Being, our highest generalisation, is in ourselves, and we are That. "O Shvetaketu, thou art That." You are that Impersonal Being; that God for whom you have been searching all over the universe is all the time yourself—yourself not in the personal sense but in the Impersonal. The

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man we know now, the manifested, is personalised, but the reality of this is the Impersonal. To understand the personal we have to refer it to the Impersonal, the particular must be referred to the general, and that Impersonal is the Truth, the Self of man.

There will be various questions in connection with this, and I shall try to answer them as we go on. Many difficulties will arise, but first let us clearly understand the position of monism. As manifested beings we appear to be separate, but our reality is one, and the less we think of ourselves as separate from that One, the better for us. The more we think of ourselves as separate from the Whole, the more miserable we become. From this monistic principle we get at the basis of ethics, and I venture to say that we cannot get any ethics from anywhere else. We know that the oldest idea of ethics was the will of some particular being or beings, but few are ready to accept that now, because it would be only a partial generalisation.

The Hindus say we must not do this or that because the Vedas say so, but the Christian is not going to obey the authority of the Vedas. The Christian says you must do this and to do that because the Bible says so. That will not be binding on those who do not believe in the Bible. But we must have a theory which is large enough to take in all these various grounds. Just as there are millions of people who are ready to believe in a Personal Creator, there have also been thousands of the brightest minds in this world who felt that such ideas were not sufficient for them, and wanted something higher, and wherever religion was not broad enough to include all these minds, the result was that the brightest minds in society were always outside of religion; and never was this so marked as at the present time, especially in Europe.

To include these minds, therefore, religion must become broad enough. Everything it claims must be judged from the standpoint of reason. Why religions should claim that they are not bound to abide by the standpoint of reason, no one knows. If one does not take the standard of reason, there cannot be any true judgment, even in the case of religions. One religion may ordain something very hideous. For instance, the Mohammedan religion allows Mohammedans to kill all who are not of their religion.

It is clearly stated in the Koran, "Kill the infidels if they do not become Mohammedans." They must be put to fire and sword. Now if we tell a Mohammedan that this is wrong, he will naturally ask, "How do you know that? How do you know it is not good? My book says it is." If you say your book is older, there will come the Buddhist, and say, my book is much older still. Then will come the Hindu, and say, my books are the oldest of all. Therefore referring to books will not do. Where is the standard by which you can compare? You will say, look at the Sermon on the Mount, and the Mohammedan will reply, look at the Ethics of the Koran.

The Mohammedan will say, who is the arbiter as to which is the better of the two? Neither the New Testament nor the Koran can be the arbiter in a quarrel between them. There must be some independent authority, and that cannot be any book, but something

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which is universal; and what is more universal than reason? It has been said that reason is not strong enough; it does not always help us to get at the Truth; many times it makes mistakes, and, therefore, the conclusion is that we must believe in the authority of a church! That was said to me by a Roman Catholic, but I could not see the logic of it. On the other hand I should say, if reason be so weak, a body of priests would be weaker, and I am not going to accept their verdict, but I will abide by my reason, because with all its weakness there is some chance of my getting at truth through it; while, by the other means, there is no such hope at all.

We should, therefore, follow reason and also sympathise with those who do not come to any sort of belief, following reason. For it is better that mankind should become atheist by following reason than blindly believe in two hundred millions of gods on the authority of anybody. What we want is progress, development, realisation. No theories ever made men higher. No amount of books can help us to become purer. The only power is in realisation, and that lies in ourselves and comes from thinking. Let men think. A clod of earth never thinks; but it remains only a lump of earth. The glory of man is that he is a thinking being. It is the nature of man to think and therein he differs from animals. I believe in reason and follow reason having seen enough of the evils of authority, for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority.

The Hindus believe that creation has come out of the Vedas. How do you know there is a cow? Because the word cow is in the Vedas. How do you know there is a man outside? Because the word man is there. If it had not been, there would have been no man outside. That is what they say. Authority with a vengeance! And it is not studied as I have studied it, but some of the most powerful minds have taken it up and spun out wonderful logical theories round it. They have reasoned it out, and there it stands—a whole system of philosophy; and thousands of the brightest intellects have been dedicated through thousands of years to the working out of this theory. Such has been the power of authority, and great are the dangers thereof. It stunts the growth of humanity, and we must not forget that we want growth. Even in all relative truth, more than the truth itself, we want the exercise. That is our life.

The monistic theory has this merit that it is the most rational of all the religious theories that we can conceive of. Every other theory, every conception of God which is partial and little and personal is not rational. And yet monism has this grandeur that it embraces all these partial conceptions of God as being necessary for many. Some people say that this personal explanation is irrational. But it is consoling; they want a consoling religion and we understand that it is necessary for them. The clear light of truth very few in this life can bear, much less live up to.

It is necessary, therefore, that this comfortable religion should exist; it helps many souls to a better one. Small minds whose circumference is very limited and which require little things to build them up, never venture to soar high in thought. Their conceptions are very good and helpful to them, even if only of little gods and symbols. But you have

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to understand the Impersonal, for it is in and through that alone that these others can be explained. Take, for instance, the idea of a Personal God. A man who understands and believes in the Impersonal—John Stuart Mill, for example—may say that a Personal God is impossible, and cannot be proved. I admit with him that a Personal God cannot be demonstrated.

But He is the highest reading of the Impersonal that can be reached by the human intellect, and what else is the universe but various readings of the Absolute? It is like a book before us, and each one has brought his intellect to read it, and each one has to read it for himself. There is something which is common in the intellect of all men; therefore certain things appear to be the same to the intellect of mankind. That you and I see a chair proves that there is something common to both our minds. Suppose a being comes with another sense, he will not see the chair at all; but all beings similarly constituted will see the same things.

Thus this universe itself is the absolute, the unchangeable, the noumenon; and the phenomenon constitutes the reading thereof. For you will first find that all phenomena are finite. Every phenomenon that we can see, feel, or think of, is finite, limited by our knowledge, and the Personal God as we conceive of Him is in fact a phenomenon. The very idea of causation exists only in the phenomenal world, and God as the cause of this universe must naturally be thought of as limited, and yet He is the same Impersonal God. This very universe, as we have seen, is the same Impersonal Being read by our intellect. Whatever is reality in the universe is that Impersonal Being, and the forms and conceptions are given to it by our intellects. Whatever is real in this table is that Being, and the table form and all other forms are given by our intellects.

Now, motion, for instance, which is a necessary adjunct of the phenomenal, cannot be predicated of the Universal. Every little bit, every atom inside the universe, is in a constant state of change and motion, but the universe as a whole is unchangeable, because motion or change is a relative thing; we can only think of something in motion in comparison with something which is not moving. There must be two things in order to understand motion. The whole mass of the universe, taken as a unit, cannot move. In regard to what will it move?

It cannot be said to change. With regard to what will it change? So the whole is the absolute; but within it every particle is in a constant state of flux and change. It is unchangeable and changeable at the same time, Impersonal and Personal in one. This is our conception of the universe, of motion and of God, and that is what is meant by "Thou art That". Thus we see that the Impersonal instead of dong away with the personal, the Absolute instead of pulling down the relative, only explains it to the full satisfaction of our reason and heart. The Personal God and all that exists in the universe are the same Impersonal Being seen through our minds. When we shall be rid of our minds, our little personalities, we shall become one with It. This is what is meant by "Thou art That". For we must know our true nature, the Absolute.

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The finite, manifested man forgets his source and thinks himself to be entirely separate. We, as personalised, differentiated beings, forget our reality, and the teaching of monism is not that we shall give up these differentiations, but we must learn to understand what they are. We are in reality that Infinite Being, and our personalities represent so many channels through which this Infinite Reality is manifesting Itself; and the whole mass of changes which we call evolution is brought about by the soul trying to manifest more and more of its infinite energy. We cannot stop anywhere on this side of the Infinite; our power, and blessedness, and wisdom, cannot but grow into the Infinite. Infinite power and existence and blessedness are ours, and we have not to acquire them; they are our own, and we have only to manifest them.

This is the central idea of monism, and one that is so hard to understand. From my childhood everyone around me taught weakness; I have been told ever since I was born that I was a weak thing. It is very difficult for me now to realise my own strength, but by analysis and reasoning I gain knowledge of my own strength, I realise it. All the knowledge that we have in this world, where did it come from? It was within us. What knowledge is outside? None. Knowledge was not in matter; it was in man all the time. Nobody ever created knowledge; man brings it from within.

It is lying there. The whole of that big banyan tree which covers acres of ground, was in the little seed which was, perhaps, no bigger than one eighth of a mustard seed; all that mass of energy was there confined. The gigantic intellect, we know, lies coiled up in the protoplasmic cell, and why should not the infinite energy? We know that it is so. It may seem like a paradox, but is true. Each one of us has come out of one protoplasmic cell, and all the powers we possess were coiled up there.

You cannot say they came from food; for if you heap up food mountains high, what power comes out of it? The energy was there, potentially no doubt, but still there. So is infinite power in the soul of man, whether he knows it or not. Its manifestation is only a question of being conscious of it. Slowly this infinite giant is, as it were, waking up, becoming conscious of his power, and arousing himself; and with his growing consciousness, more and more of his bonds are breaking, chains are bursting asunder, and the day is sure to come when, with the full consciousness of his infinite power and wisdom, the giant will rise to his feet and stand erect. Let us all help to hasten that glorious consummation.

Vivekananda widely popularised Vedanta in the West, but his teachings represent only one particular school, called Advaita (literally "non-dualism," often called "monism". Vivekananda somewhat modernised the original Advaita doctrine of Shankara. The main antagonists of Advaita are the dualistic schools of Vaishnavism.

Vedanta is closely aligned with its sister school, Mimamsa (meaning "enquiry"). The two are often called Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa, denoting the earlier and later schools of enquiry. The earlier Mimamsa deals with *dharma* and focuses on rituals, particularly for promotion to higher planets. Its main texts are from the *Karma-kanda* section of the Vedas.

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The later school, Vedanta, deals with Brahman and derives much from the *Jnana-kanda* section, especially the Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras (also known as the Brahma Sutras). Members of these two doctrines are traditionally at loggerheads, but they are essentially complementary. Much of modern Hinduism, though philosophically grounded in its Vedanta, borrows its ritualistic practice from *Purva Mimamsa*.

There are ten principal schools of Vedanta. Of these, two are purely Advaita, one purely Dvaita and seven a synthesis of both. In Hinduism as represented in the UK, there are four important schools of Vedanta.

The Four Main Schools of Vedanta Represented in the UK

For any tradition to be accepted as a genuine Vedantic school, the founder must present commentaries on three scriptures – the Upanishads, the Vedanta Sutras, and the *Bhagavadgita*, collectively called the "*Prasthana trayi*."

Below are the four main branches of Vedanta along with: its founding theologian, the *Sampradaya*, the main representative movement in the UK.

School	*Theologian*	*Sampradaya*	*UK Movement*
Advaita (monism)	Shankara	*Smartas*	Ramakrishna Mission
Vishishtadvaita (qualified monism)	Ramanuja	Shri Vaishnavas	Swami Narayana Mission
SuddhAdvaita (purified monism)	Vallabha	Pushti Marg	Shree Vallabha Nidhi
Achintya Bheda-abheda	Baladeva	Gaufdiya Vaishnava	ISKCON (Hare Krishna Movement)

Common Misunderstandings

Vedanta (and all Hinduism) is entirely monistic, believing only in the all-pervading world-soul, Brahman, rather than a personal God.

This *Advaita* philosophy is certainly popular, and offers a simple explanation of the many deities. Nonetheless, many theologians have considered God to be a person. He is not merely an anthropomorphic representation, nor are the various deities and *murtis* simply incarnations or representations of an impersonal Supreme.

Thus Hinduism includes both monism and monotheism. It is misleading to call the Abrahamanic religions, "the monotheistic traditions," implying that monotheism is absent from the Eastern traditions. Vedanta includes many monotheistic schools. They may accept the existence of many gods and goddesses, but strongly emphasise the pre-eminence of the Supreme Deity.

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VEDIC PHILOSOPHERS

Adi Shankara

Dates: c. 788 to 820 CE

Birth place: Kalady, Kerala, India

Philosophy: Advaita Vedanta

Teacher: Govinda Bhagavatpada

Influenced: Hinduism, Hindu philosophy

Founded: Dashanami Sampradaya, Shanmata

Adi Shankara and Bhagavatpadacarya (or, the teacher at the feet of God), c. 788 – 820 CE, was the first philosopher in the tradition of Advaita Vedanta, a sub-school of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy, and is recognized as the first teacher to have consolidated its doctrine. His teachings are based on unity of the soul and God, wherein the latter is viewed as simultaneously being personal and attributeless. In the Smrta tradition, he is regarded as an incarnation of Shiva.

Adi Shankara toured India with the purpose of propagating his philosophies primarily through seminal debates with other philosophers. In the process, he founded four mathas (abbeys) at the four cardinal directions, which, along with the Hindu Smartas, played a key historical role in the further development and spread of Hinduism and the Advaita Vedanta philosophy and continue to do so.

Life: The traditional source for accounts of Adi Shankara's life are the Shankara Vijayams (literally *Victory of Shankara*), which are poetic works that contain biographical material written in an the epic style of legend. The most important among these biographiesz According to these texts, Adi Shankara was born in Kalady, Kerala, India, to a Namboothiri brahmin couple, Shivaguru and Aryamba and lived for thirty two years.

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Birth and Childhood: The birth place of Adi Shankara at Kalady. Adi Shankara's parents were childless for many years. They prayed at the Vadakkumnathan (Vicacala) temple in Thrissur, Kerala, for the birth of a child. Legend has it that Shiva appeared to both husband and wife in their dreams, and offered them a choice: a mediocre son who would live a long life, or an extraordinary son who would not live long. Both the parents chose the latter; thus a son was born to them. He was named Shankara (bestower of happiness), in honour of Shiva (one of whose epithets is Shankara).

His father died while Shankara was very young. Shankara's upanayanac, the inititiation into student-life, was performed at the age of five. As a child, Shankara showed remarkable scholarship, mastering the four Vedas by the age of eight. Following the customs of those days, Shankara studied and lived at the home of his teacher. It was customary for students and men of learning to receive Bhikca (alms) from the laity; on one occasion, while accepting Bhikca, Shankara came upon a woman who had only a single dried amalaka fruit to eat. Rather than consuming this last bit of food herself, the pious lady gave away the fruit to Shankara as Bhikca. Moved by her piety, Shankara composed the Kanakadhara Stotram on the spot. Legend has it that on completion of the stotra, golden amalaka fruits were showered upon the woman by Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth.

Madhva: From a young age, Shankara was attracted to sannyasa (monastic life). His mother was against his becoming an monk, and refused him her formal permission. However, once when Shankara was bathing in the Purna River near his house, a crocodile gripped his leg and began to drag him into the water. Only his mother was nearby, and it proved impossible for her to rescue him. Shankara then told his mother that he was on the verge of death, would live only if she gave him permission to renounce the world and become a monk. At the end of her wits, his mother agreed. Shankara immediately recited the mantras that made a renunciate of him. The crocodile released him and swam away. Shankara emerged unscathed from the river.

With the permission of his mother, Shankara left Kerala and travelled towards North India in search of a Guru. On the banks of the Narmada River, he met Govinda Bhagavatpada, the disciple of Gaudapada. When Govinda Bhagavatpada asked Shankara's identity, he replied with an extempore verse that brought out the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Govinda Bhagavatapada was impressed and took Shankara as his disciple.

Adi Shankara was commissioned by his Guru to write a commentary on the Brahma Sutras and propagate the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. The Madhaviya Shankaravijaya states that Adi Shankara calmed a flood from the Reva River by placing his *kamagalu* (water pot) in the path of the raging water, thus saving his Guru, Govinda Bhagavatpada, who was engaged in Samdhi (meditation) in a cave nearby. On his mission to spread the Advaita Vedanta philosophy, Adi Shankara travelled to Kashi, where a young man named Sanandana from Choladesha in South India, became his first disciple. In Kashi, Adi Shankara had an encounter with an untouchable-on his way to the Vishwanath Temple,

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he came upon an untouchable with four dogs. When asked to move aside by Shankara's disciples, the untouchable replied: "Do you wish that I move my ever lasting Atman (Self), or this body made of food?" Understanding that the untouchable was none other than god Shiva, and his dogs the four Vedas, Shankara prostrated himself before him, composing five shlokas known as Manisha Panchakam.

On reaching Badari in the Himalayas, he wrote the famous *Bhashyas* (commentaries) and *Prakarana granthas* (philosophical treatises). Afterwards he taught these commentaries to his disciples. Some, like Sanandana, were quick to grasp the essence; the other disciples thus became jealous of Sanandana. In order to convince the others of Sanandana's inherent superiority, Adi Shankara summoned Sanandana from one bank of the Ganga River, while he was on the opposite bank. Sanandana crossed the river by walking on the lotuses that were brought out wherever he placed his foot. Adi Shankara was greatly impressed by his disciple and gave him the name Padmapada (lotus-footed one). The sage, Vedavysa, visited Adi Shankara in the guise of an old brhmaGa. Adi Shankara debated with the brahmana for over eight days when at last, Vyasa revealed his real identity and blessed Adi Shankara.

Meeting with Mandana Mishra: One of the most famous debates of Adi Shankara was with the ritualist Mandana Mishra. Mandana Mishra's Guru was the famous Mimamsa philosopher, Kumarla Bhamma. Shankara sought a debate with Kumarila Bhamma and met him in Prayag where he had buried himself in a slow burning pyre to repent for sins committed against his Guru: Kumarila Bhamma had learnt Buddhist philosophy incognito from him in order to be able to refute it. This constitues a sin according to the Vedas. Kumarila Bhamma thus asked Adi Shankara to proceed to Mahicmati (known today as Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh) to meet Mandana Mishra and debate with him instead.

Adi Shankara had a famous debate with Mandana Mishra in which the wife of Mandana Mishra, Ubhaya Bharati, was the referee. After debating for over fifteen days, Mandana Mishra accepted defeat. Ubhaya Bharati then challenged Adi Shankara to have a debate with her in order to 'complete' the victory. This debate was to be on the subject of *kmauastra* (science of sex-love). But Adi Shankara, being a sannyasi, had no knowledge of this subject; thus, after requesting for some time before entering into this fresh debate, he entered the body of a king by his yogic powers and acquired the knowledge of kamauastra. Later, however, Ubhaya Bharati declined to debate with him and allowed Mandana Mishra to accept sannyasa with the monastic name, Sureuvaracarya as per the agreed rules of the debate.

Dig-vijaya: Adi Shankara then travelled with his disciples to Maharashtra and Srisailam. In Srisailam, he composed Shivanandalahari, a devotional hymn to Shiva. The Madhaviya Shankaravijayam says that when Shankara was about to be sacrificed by a Kapalika, the god Narasimha appeared to save Shankara on Padmapada's prayer to him. So Adi Shankara composed the Laksmi-Narasimha stotra to praise Narasimha. He then

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travelled to Gokarna, the temple of Hari-Shankara and the Mkambika temple at Kollur. At Kollur he accepted a boy believed to be dumb by his parents, as his disciple. He gave him the name, Hastmalakcrya (one with the amalaka fruit on his palm, *i.e.*, one who has clearly realised the Self).

After this, Adi Shankara began a *Dig-vijaya* (missionary tour) for the propagation of the Advaita philosophy by controverting all philosophies opposed to it. With King Sudhanva of Kerala as companion, Shankara passed through Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Vidarbha. He then started towards Karnataka where he encountered a band of armed Kapalikas. King Sudhanva, with his army, resisted and defeated the kapalikas. They safely reached Gokarna where Shankara defeated in debate the Shaiva scholar, Neelakanta.

Proceeding to the west in Dwarka, Shankara defeated the Vaicnavas in debate. Bhamma Bhaskara of Ujjayini, the proponent of Bhedabeda philosophy, was humbled. All the scholars of Ujjayini (also known as Avanti) accepted Adi Shankara's philosophy. He then defeated the Jainas at a place called Bahlika. Later, he had an encounter with a tantrik, Navagupta at Kamarupa. Navagupta pretended to have become a disciple, but later caused Adi Shankara to develop a rectal fistula. However, Adi Shankara was soon cured and Navagupta later died of the same disease.

Adi Shankara thus travelled throughout India, from the South to Kashmir and Nepal, preaching to the local populace and debating philosophy with Hindu, Buddhist and other scholars and monks along the way.

Accession to Sarvajnapitha: Adi Shankara visited *Sarvajnapimha* in Kashmir (now in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir). The Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya states this temple had four doors for scholars from the four cardinal directions. The southern door (representing South India) had never been opened, indicating that no scholar from South India had entered the Sarvajna Pitha. Adi Shankara opened the southern door by defeating in debate all the scholars there in all the various scholastic disciplines such as Mimamsa, Vedanta and other branches of Hindu philosophy; he ascended the throne of Transcendent wisdom of that temple. The Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya states that Goddess Saraswati (goddess of knowledge and all literary arts) herself proclaimed the unquestioned scholarly triumph of Adi Shankara on this occasion.

Shankara then travelled to Kedarnath and attained *videha mukti* (final liberation) at the age of thirty two. However, there are variant traditions on the location of his last days. The Kanchi matha followers believe he achieved *videha mukti* in Kanchi. Another tradition expounded by *Keraliya Shankaravijaya* places his place of death as Vadakkunnathan temple in Thrissur, Kerala.

Philosophy and Religious Thought: The swan is an important motif in Advaita Vedanta. Its symbolic meanings are: firstly, the swan is called *hamsa* in Sanskrit (which becomes *hamso* if the first letter in the next word is /h/). Upon repeating this *hamso* indefinitely, it becomes *so-aham*, meaning, "I am That". Secondly, just as a swan lives

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in water but its feathers are not soiled by water, similarly a liberated Advaitin lives in this world full of maya but is untouched by its illusion. Thirdly, a Sannyasi of the Dashanami order (founded by Adi Shankara) is called a *Paramahansa* (the Supreme Swan).

Advaita (literally, *non-duality*) is often called a monistic system of thought. The word "Advaita" essentially refers to the identity of the Self (Atman) and the Whole (Brahman). The key source texts for all schools of Vedanta are the Prasthanatrayi– the canonical texts consisting of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras. Adi Shankara was the first in its tradition to consolidate the siddhanta (system) of Advaita Vedanta. He wrote commentaries on the Prasthana Trayi. A famous quote from Vivekacmagi, one of his *prakarana granthas* (philosophical treatises) that succintly summarises his philosophy is:

Brahman is the only truth, the world is unreal, and there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and individual self.

Advaita Vedanta is based on *uastra* (scriptures), *yukti* (reason) and *anubhava* (experience), and aided by *karmas* (spiritual practices). This philosophy provides a clear-cut way of life to be followed. Starting from childhood, when learning has to start, the philosophy has to be realised in practice throughout one's life even upto death. This is the reason why this philosophy is called an experiential philosophy, the underlying tenet being "That thou art", meaning that ultimately there is no difference between the experiencer and the experienced (the world) as well as the universal spirit (Brahman). Among the followers of Advaita, as well those of other doctrines, there are believed to have appeared *Jivanmuktas*, ones liberated while alive. These individuals (commonly called *Mahatmas*, great souls, among Hindus) are those who realised the oneness of their self and the universal spirit called Brahman.

Advaita Vedanta in Summary: Adi Shankara's treatises on the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras are his principal and almost undeniably his own works. Although he mostly adhered to traditional means of commenting on the Brahma Sutra, there are a number of original ideas and arguments. He taught that it was only through direct knowledge of Brahman that one could be enlightened.

Adi Shankara's opponents accused him of teaching Buddhism in the garb of Hinduism, because his non-dualistic ideals were a bit radical to contemporary Hindu philosophy. However, it may be noted that while the Later Buddhists arrived at a changeless, deathless, absolute truth after their insightful understanding of the unreality of samsara, historically Vedantins never liked this idea. Although Advaita proposes the theory of Maya, explaining the universe as a "trick of a magician", Adi Shankara and his followers see this as a consequence of their basic premise that Brahman alone is real. Their idea of Maya emerges from their belief in the reality of Brahman, rather than the other way around.

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Historical and Cultural Impact: At the time of Adi Shankara's life, Hinduism had began to decline because of the influence of Buddhism and Jainism. Hinduism had become divided into innumerable sects, each quarreling with the others. The followers of Mimamsa and Sankhya philosophy were atheists, in so much that they did not believe in God as a unified being. Besides these atheists, there were numerous theistic sects. There were those who rejected the Vedas, like the Charvakas.

Adi Shankara held debates with the leading scholars of all these sects and schools of philosophy to controvert their doctrines. He unified the theistic sects into a common framework of Shanmata system. In his works, Adi Shankara stressed the importance of the Vedas, and his efforts helped Hinduism regain strength and popularity. He travelled on foot to various parts of India to restore the study of the Vedas.

Even though he lived for only thirty-two years, his impact on India and on Hinduism was striking. He reintroduced a purer form of Vedic thought. His teachings and tradition form the basis of Smartism and have influenced Sant Mat lineages. He is the main figure in the tradition of Advaita Vedanta. He was the founder of the *Daanmi Sampradya* of Hindu monasticism and *bagmata* of Smarta tradition. He introduced the *Pacyatana* form of worship. Adi Shankara, along with Madhva and Ramanuja, was instrumental in the revival of Hinduism. These three teachers formed the doctrines that are followed by their respective sects even today. They have been the most important figures in the recent history of Hindu philosophy. In their writings and debates, they provided polemics against the non-Vedantic schools of Sankhya, Vaisheshika etc. Thus they paved the way for Vedanta to be the dominant and most widely followed tradition among the schools of Hindu philosophy.

The Vedanta school stresses most on the Upanishads (which are themselves called Vedanta, *End or culmination of the Vedas*), unlike the other schools that gave importance to texts authored by their founders. The Vedanta schools have the belief that the Vedas, which include the Upanishads, are unauthored, forming a continuous tradition of wisdom transmitted orally. Thus the concept of *apaurusheyatva* (being unauthored) came to be the guiding force behind the Vedanta schools. However, along with stressing the importance of Vedic tradition, Adi Shankara gave equal importance to the personal experience of the student. Logic, grammar, Mimamsa and allied subjects form main areas of study in all the Vedanta schools.

A well known verse, recited in the Smarta tradition, in praise of Adi Shankara is:

I salute the compassionate abode of the Vedas, Smritis and Puranas known as Shankara Bhagavatpada, who makes the world auspicious.

Works: Adi Shankara's works deal with logically establishing the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta as he saw it in the Upanishads. He formulates the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta by validating his arguments on the basis of quotations from the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures. He gives a high priority to *svanubhava* (personal experience) of the student.

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A large portion of his works is polemical in nature. He directs his polemics mostly against the Sankhya, Bauddha, Jaina, Vaisheshika and other non-vedantic Hindu philosophies.

Traditionally, his works are classified under Bhacya (*commentary*), Prakaraga gratha (*philosophical treatise*) and Stotra (*devotional hymn*). The commentaries serve to provide a consistent interpretation of the scriptural texts from the perspective of Advaita Vedanta. The philosophical treatises provide various methodologies to the student to understand the doctrine. The devotional hymns are rich in poetry and piety, serving to highlight the helplessness of the devotee and the glory of the diety. Of his works, the authenticity of the Viveka Chudamani and a few *Bhashyas* are questioned.

Adi Shankara wrote *Bhashyas* on the ten major Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. In his works, he quotes from Shveshvatara, Kaushitakai, Mahanarayana and Jabala Upanishads, among others. *Bhashyas* on Kaushitaki, Nrisimhatapani and Shveshvatara Upanishads are extant but the authenticity is doubtful. Adi Shankara's commentary on the Brahma Sutras is the earliest one available on this topic. However Adi Shankara mentions older commentaries like those of Dravida, Bhartiprapancha and others.

In his Brahma Sutra Bhashya, Adi Shankara cites the examples of Dharmavyadha, Vidura and others who were born with the knowledge of Brahman acquired in previous births. He mentions that the effects cannot be prevented from working on account of their present birth. He states that the knowledge that arises out of the study of the Vedas could be had through the Puranas and the Itihasas. In the Taittiriya Upanishad Bhashya 2.2, he says:

> *It has been established that everyone has the right to the knowledge (of Brahman) and that the supreme goal is attained by that knowledge alone.*

Ramanuja Acharya

Period: 1017 to 1137

Place of Birth: Sri Perumbudur, Tamil Nadu

Guru: Sri Periya Nambigal

Names: 1. Ilaya Perumal, As named by his parents 2. Lakshmana

Family Name: 1. Ramanuja, 2. Yetiraja, 3. Bhashyakarar, 6. Udeyavar, 7. Emberumanar, As named by his guru Thirukkottiyur Nambi

Avatars (believed): Adishesha

Sishyas: 1. Mudaliyandan, 2. Koorathalwan

Sri Ramanuja Acharya (traditionally dated 1017–1137 CE) was an Indian philosopher and is recognized as the most important saint of Sri Vaishnavism. He held the Vishishtadvaita or qualified Nondualist belief that the world and Brahman were united, like a soul and a body are. His version of Indian Nondualism differed from Adi Shankara's

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because he acknowledged the existence of differences, and believed that the identity of an object as a part was as important as the unity of the whole. The Vaishnava Theology espoused by Ramanuja posits that Brahman is not devoid of attributes but is expressed as a personal God, full of infinite good qualities, as Narayana. The Adishesha on whom Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam rests is believed to be Ramanuja.

Formative Years: Ramanuja was born Ilaya Perumal to a smartha brahmin family in the village of Perumbudur, Tamil Nadu, India in 1017 CE. His father was Keshava Somayaji Deekshitar and mother was Kanthimathi in sect of Vadama.From a young age, his intelligence and ability to comprehend highly abstract philosophical points were legendary. He took initiation from Yadavaprakasa, a renowned Advaitic scholar. Though his new guru was highly impressed with his analytical ability, he was quite concerned by how much emphasis Ramanuja placed on bhakti.

After frequent clashes over interpretation, Yadavaprakasa decided the young Ramanuja was becoming too much of a threat and plotted a way to kill him. However, Ramanuja's cousin Govinda Bhatta (a favourite of Yadavaprakasa) discovered the plot and helped him escape. An alternative version is that one of Yadavaprakasa's students plotted to kill Ramanuja as a means of pleasing their teacher, but Sri Ramanuja escaped in the afore-mentioned manner. Yadavaprakasa was horrified when learnt about the conspiracy.

After renouncing the life of a house-holder, Ramanuja travelled to Srirangam to meet an aging Yamunacharya, the pre-eminent Vishishtadvaita philosopher of the time. Yamunacharya had died prior to Ramanuja's arrival, but had left three tasks for Ramanuja to carry out.

- Teach the doctrine of Saranagati (surrender) to God as the means to moksha.
- A Visishtadvaita Bhashya should be written for the Brahma Sutras of Vyasa which had previously been taught orally to the disciples of the Visishtadvaita philosophy.
- That the names of Parauara, the author of Vishnu Puraoa, and saint Uahakopa should be perpetuated.

Ramanuja pledged to God to do as he had been requested and accepted Yamunacharya as his *Manasika Acharya*. All three tasks were successfully completed.

Five Acharyas: Swami Ramanuja incorporated teachings from 5 different people who he considered to be his acharyas

1. Peria Nambigal who performed his samasrayana
2. Thirukkotiyur Nambigal : who revealed the meaning of Charama slokam to swami on his 18th trip
3. Thirumalai Nambigal : Ramayana
4. Tirumalai Aandaan : Bhagavad Vishayam
5. Thirukachchi Nambigal : The 6 sentences or Perarulalan

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Visishtadvaita Philosophy: Ramanuja's philosophy is referred to as Vishishtadvaita because it combines Advaita (oneness of God) with Vishesha (attributes). The philosophy is monotheistic.

Differences with Sankara: Adi Sankara had argued that all qualities or manifestations that can be perceived are unreal and temporary. They are a result of ignorance. Ramanuja believed them to be real and permanent and under the control of the Brahman. God can be one despite the existence of attributes, because they cannot exist alone; they are not independent entities. They are Prakaras or the modes, Sesha or the accessories, and Niyama or the controlled aspects, of the one Brahman.

In Sri Ramanuja's system of philosophy, the Lord (Narayana) has two inseparable Prakaras or modes, *viz.*, the world and the souls. These are related to Him as the body is related to the soul. They have no existence apart from Him. They inhere in Him as attributes in a substance. Matter and souls constitute the body of the Lord. The Lord is their indweller. He is the controlling Reality. Matter and souls are the subordinate elements. They are termed Viseshanas, attributes. God is the Viseshya or that which is qualified.

History shows that the followers of Sankara are answerless till date to the strong arguments of Ramanuja (in his sri bhashya) and his followers (satadushani of desika,...). In a bid to escape strong objections raised by Ramanuja and his successors, most advaitins take a disguised route of neo vedantism, where they argue that vaishnavism is one another path to realise brahman. Ironically, the very brahman of Ramanuja and Sankara are different.

Ramanuja opines, wrong is the position of the Advaitins that understanding the Upanishads without knowing and practicing dharma can result in Brahman knowledge. The knowledge of Brahman that ends spiritual ignorance is meditational, not (as Advaitins seem to presume) testimonial or verbal.

In contrast to Sankara, Ramanuja holds. There is no knowledge source in support of the claim that there is a distinctionless (homogeneous) Brahman. All knowledge sources reveal objects as distinct from other objects. All experience reveals an object known in some way or other beyond mere existence. Testimony depends on the operation of distinct sentence parts (words with distinct meanings). Thus the claim that testimony makes known that reality is distinctionless is contradicted by the very nature of testimony as a knowledge means. Even the simplest perceptual cognition reveals something (Bessie) as qualified by something else (a broken hoof, "Bessie has a broken hoof," as known perceptually). Inference depends on perception and makes the same distinct things known as does perception.

Against the Advaita contention that perception cannot make known distinctness but only homogeneous being since distinctness cannot be defined, well, sorry, perception makes known generic characters (cowhood and the like) that differentiate things. If what

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you Advaitins say were true, why should not a person looking for a horse be satisfied with a buffalo? Remembering could not be distinguished from perceiving, because there would be only the one object (being). And no one would be deaf or blind. Furthermore, Brahman would be an object of perception and the other sources (prameya).

He also holds, The Advaitin argument about prior absences and no prior absence of consciousness is wrong. Similarly the Advaitin understanding of a-vidya (not-Knowledge), which is the absence of spiritual knowledge, is incorrect. "If the distinction between spiritual knowledge and spiritual ignorance is unreal, then spiritual ignorance and the self are one."

The Seven Objections to Shankara's Advaita: Ramanuja picks out what he sees as seven fundamental flaws in the Advaita philosophy for special attack: he sees them as so fundamental to the Advaita position that if he is right in identifying them as involving doctrinal contradictions, then Sankara's entire system collapses. He argues:

1. The nature of Avidya. Avidya must be either real or unreal; there is no other possibility. But neither of these is possible. If Avidya is real, non-dualism collapses into dualism. If it is unreal, we are driven to self-contradiction or infinite regress.
2. The incomprehensibility of Avidya. Advaitins claim that Avidya is neither real nor unreal but incomprehensible, {anirvacaniya.} All cognition is either of the real or the unreal: the Advaitin claim flies in the face of experience, and accepting it would call into question all cognition and render it unsafe.
3. The grounds of knowledge of Avidya. No pramana can establish Avidya in the sense the Advaitin requires. Advaita philosophy presents Avidya not as a mere lack of knowledge, as something purely negative, but as an obscuring layer which covers Brahman and is removed by true Brahma-vidya. Avidya is positive nescience not mere ignorance. Ramanuja argues that positive nescience is established neither by perception, nor by inference, nor by scriptural testimony. On the contrary, Ramanuja argues, all cognition is of the real.
4. The locus of Avidya. Where is the Avidya that gives rise to the (false) impression of the reality of the perceived world? There are two possibilities; it could be Brahman's Avidya or the individual soul's {jiva.} Neither is possible. Brahman is knowledge; Avidya cannot co-exist as an attribute with a nature utterly incompatible with it. Nor can the individual soul be the locus of Avidya: the existence of the individual soul is due to Avidya; this would lead to a vicious circle.
5. Avidya's obscuration of the nature of Brahman. Sankara would have us believe that the true nature of Brahman is somehow covered-over or obscured by Avidya. Ramanuja regards this as an absurdity: given that Advaita claims that Brahman is pure self-luminous consciousness, obscuration must mean either preventing the origination of this (impossible since Brahman is eternal) or the destruction of it- equally absurd.

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6. The removal of Avidya by Brahma-vidya. Advaita claims that Avidya has no beginning, but it is terminated and removed by Brahma-vidya, the intuition of the reality of Brahman as pure, undifferentiated consciousness. But Ramanuja denies the existence of undifferentiated {nirguna} Brahman, arguing that whatever exists has attributes: Brahman has infinite auspicious attributes. Liberation is a matter of Divine Grace: no amount of learning or wisdom will deliver us.
7. The removal of Avidya. For the Advaitin, the bondage in which we dwell before the attainment of Moksa is caused by Maya and Avidya; knowledge of reality (Brahma-vidya) releases us. Ramanuja, however, asserts that bondage is real. No kind of knowledge can remove what is real. On the contrary, knowledge discloses the real; it does not destroy it. And what exactly is the saving knowledge that delivers us from bondage to Maya? If it is real then non-duality collapses into duality; if it is unreal, then we face an utter absurdity.

He was critical of the caste system. He said, "Does the wearing of a sacred thread make one a Brahmin? One who is devoted to God (Narayana) alone is a Brahmin."

His Sarangati philosophy emphasises that anyone, irrespective of colour, creed, caste, sex and religion can surrender their mind, body and soul to the Lotus foot of Lord Narayana and the God would accept him/her.

Cited from Sri Ramanuja, His Life, Religion, and Philosophy, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, India.

Writings: Ramanuja's most famous work is known as the Sri Bhasya. It is a commentary on the Brahma Sutras.

Gadhya Thrayam (three compositions)-Vaikunta, Sriranga and Saranagati Gadhyam are great works in Vaishnava philosophy.

His other works are:

- Vedanta Sara (essence of Vedanta)
- Vedanta Sangraha (a resume of Vedanta)
- Vedanta Deepa (the light of Vedanta).

An interesting point in Ramanuja's works is that, He happens to have composed all his works only in the Sanskrit language.

Shri Madhvacharya

Period : 1238 to 1317

Place of Birth : Pajaka, Udupi

Guru : Achyuta Prajnya

Names : 1. Vasudeva, as named by his parents 2. Poornaprajnya (One who knows everything)-named after attaining sainthood 3. Anandateertha (One who brings bliss

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through his preachings)-named after he succeeded his guru 4. Shri Madhvacharya. This name is not given to him by anyone but it comes from the vedas. There is a hymn in the vedas called "balitthaa sookta" where the term "madhva" has been used to refer to "mukhya praana"

Avatars: 1. Hanuman 2. Bhima Madhvaachaarya declares, in his work "Vishnu-tatva-vinirNaya:", that he was the one who took the avatars of Hanuman and Bhima. Significantly, the only other person who openly makes such a declaration about his original form is Sri Krishna, (in Bhagavad-gita).

Madhvacharya (1238-1317) was the chief proponent of Tattvavada (True Philosophy), popularly known as Dvaita or dualistic school of Hindu philosophy. It is one of the three most influential Vedanta philosophies. Madhva was one of the important philosophers during the Bhakti movement. He was a pioneer in many ways, going against standard conventions and norms. Madhvacharya is believed by his followers to be the third incarnation of Vayu, aka Mukhya Prana, after Hanuman and Bhima.

Shri Madhvacharya was born as *Vaasudeva* to Madhyageha Bhatta (father) and Vedavati (mother) at Pajaka in Udupi, Karnataka.

Madhva: The basic tenet of Madhva philosophy is the existence of two kinds of realities, namely "Independent reality" (or svatantra tatva) and "Dependent reality" (or asvatantra tatva).

- *Independent reality* (svatantra)-who/which we refer to as "God". 5 generic names are applicable to God (as per shreemad bhaagavata mahaapuraan). They are "brahman", "para brahman", "aatman", "paramaatman" and "bhagavaan". It is to be noted that by "brahman", aacharya madhva does not mean "chaturmukha brahma". The word "brahman" refers to "brihat" (meaning "big") *i.e.*, the one who/which is the biggest in this universe which, is none other than "God".

In general, aachaarya madhva's important message is that every word, every sound in this entire universe only means God which he equated with Vishnu.

According to Madhva, only Brahman is indepedent in every sense of the word.

- *Dependent reality* (asvatantra)-plurality of Jivas and Prakriti or Nature. Both the Jivas and Nature are dependent on Brahman for their very "being" and "becoming". This dependence is expressed metaphorically as *Bimba-pratibimba* (source-reflection) relation. The reflection is in everyway dependent on the source that gets reflected.

Madhva's Credo: Madhva was motivated by his four convictions-

1. A determination to remain true to experience above everything.
2. A commitment to sound reasoning
3. A fervent devotion to a personal God (Vishnu) that drove all his actions
4. Fearless tenacity in expounding his vision in the most hostile environments.

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Philosophy of Realism: Dvaita school belongs to the Realist school of Indian philosophy, in the same category as Samkhya, Nyaya, Vaisheshika and Purva mimamsa schools. They believe that the universe is a real creation of Brahman. The plurality of souls are bound by a "real" bondage due to beginning-less ignorance, and sadhana through Vishnu bhakti is the only way to be released from this bondage. Further, Madhva explains that Jnana or knowledge alone is not sufficient for the release from beginningless avidya or ignorance, since this bondage is sustained by the "Will" of Brahman and so needs Vishnu Prasadam to ultimately break the bonds of My.

"The difference between the jiva (soul) and Ishvara (Creator), and the difference between jada (insentient) and Ishvara; and the difference between various jivas, and the difference between jada and jiva; and the difference between various jadas, these five differences make up the universe." From the Paramopanishad a.k.a. Parama-shruti, as quoted by Ananda Tirtha in his 'Vishnu-tattva-vinirNaya'. Another way of saying this is that these five fundamental real differences are between: Selves and Brahman; matter and Brahman; one Self and another Self; matter and Selves; and, matter and matter.

Contrary to the Idealistic schools like Yogacara, Madhyamika buddhism or Advaita, Dvaita maintains that difference is in the very nature of a substance. This is the reason why some refer to the doctrine of Tattvavada (the preferred name) as 'Dvaita'. However, 'Dvaita' is thought to be inadequately representative of the true grain of Tattvavada.

The doctrine of Tattvavada is considered to be eternal (in a flow-like sense, just as Creation is eternal); in historical times, it was revived by Ananda Tirtha, who is also known as Madhvacharya. Because of this, followers of Tattvavada are called Madhvas, meaning followers of Madhva.

Avatars(as believed) of Shri Madhvacharya. From top (in order of occurrence): Hanuman, Bhima and Shri Madhvacharya.

Souls are not Created by God

- Madhvacharya has established that souls are eternal, and are not created by God as in the Semitic religions. The souls are dependent, not generated by Vishnu but co-exist with Him eternally, supported by His will and entirely controlled by Him. The souls, however, are dependent on Him in their pristine nature and in all transformation that they may undergo.

Three Classes of Souls and Eternal Damnation

- Additionally, Madhvacharya differed significantly from traditional Hindu beliefs in his concept of eternal damnation. For example, he divides souls into three classes, one class which qualify for liberation, Mukti-yogyas, another subject to eternal rebirth or eternally transmigrating due to samsara, Nitya-samsarins, and significantly, a class that is eventually condemned to eternal hell or Andhatamas, known as Tamo-yogyas.

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Madhva followers cite authorities such as Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 17, verses 2 et seq. "'There are three types of inclination, which are the self-same natures of the souls, these being satvika, rajasa, and tamasa," Chapter 16, verses 19-20, "These cruel haters, worst among men in the world, I hurl these evil-doers into the wombs of demons only. Entering into demoniacal wombs and deluded, birth after birth, not attaining me, they thus fall, Oh Arjuna, into a condition still lower than that," for their concept of eternal damnation. Madhvacharaya was the first in the recent years who revived the timeless Vaishnava tradition.

There were 21 different Bashayas (commenteries) before Sri Madhvacharaya. He is the first to establish the facts of tri-patriate classification of souls. By contrast, most Hindus believe that souls will eventually obtain moksha, even after millions of rebirths.

Madhvacharya's Theology as an Answer to the Eternal Problem of Evil.

- By following the concepts of souls not being created by God and classification of the souls, Madhvacharya provides a lucid answer to the problem of evil by seeking a root cause like the intrinsic nature of the soul itself. Often, evil behaviour displayed in the world might not be just the nature of the soul but also depends upon the timeless actions (Karma) of the soul itself.

Impact of Dvaita Movement

- Madhva's Dualistic view, along with Shankara's Advaita or Nondualism and Ramanuja's Qualified Nondualism or Vishishtadvaita form some core Indian beliefs on the nature of reality.
- Madhva is considered to be one of the influential theologians in Hindu history. He revitalized an Hindu monotheism in light of attacks, theological and physical, by foreign invasion. Great leaders of the Vaishnava Bhakti movement, in Karnataka, for example, Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa were part of the Dvaita traditions. Also, the famous Hindu saint, Raghavendra Swami, was a leading figure in the Dvaita tradition.

Madhvacharaya during his time not only established dvaita philosophy, but also displayed extraordinary strength and skills to show that he is the third avatara of Vayu, who came down to earth to help people suffering from delusional philosophies and guide them in the right path. Madhvacharaya at the age of 79, year 1317, disappeared from the eyes of humans and continue to reside in Upper Badari in his continuning service to his eternal master Sri Vedavyasa.

Narayana panditAcharya captures Madhvacharaya's life in a beautiful poetic verses in his "Shri Madhva Vijaya" which is in 16 Sarga (chapters), this book is an authentic work composed during his own time. This is a very rare work, there is no evidence of anyone composing works on any major philosopher like this before or after him from other disciplines. "Shri Madhva Vijaya" is a composition which captures life history of Mahdvacharaya.

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Religious Establishments: The main icon (vigraha) in Udupi of Lord Krishna was established by Madhvacharya. The 8 monasteries (ashta mathas) of Udupi have been following his philosophy since then.

Icon of Lord Krishna in Udupi installed by Shri Madhvacharya

Comparison to Mainstream Hinduism

The teachings of Sri Madhvacharya were in many ways quite radical for his times. One example is his doctrine of eternal damnation. This idea which is prevalent in Abrahamic religions, is generally not endorsed by most schools of Hindu philosophy. Many Western scholars see this and the importance given to *Mukhya Prana*-as the mediator to *Brahman*-as Christian influence. But Dvaita scholars argue that Madhva has derived these concepts from within the Vedic framework. There are many instances in the Upanishads and Gita that support Madhva's position. They also argue that since the knowledge of whether a Jiva is *Muktiyogya* (liberation-worthy) or *Tamoyogya* (damnation-worthy) is not accessible to the Jiva himself, this philosophy does not discourage *sadhana* for anyone.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa

Born: February 18, 1836 Kamarpukur, West Bengal, India

Died: 16 August, 1886 Garden House in Cossipore.

Historically, in India, emphasis is given to the teachings of saints and less attention is paid to dates and details. In the case of Ramakrishna though, we have first-hand accounts of his life and times. This was possible because many of his disciples were well-educated and had a strong desire to present only facts that could be verified from multiple sources. Some credit for collecting and recording such facts goes to Swami Saradananda, a disciple of Ramakrishna. He wrote a biography from the legends and stories which were growing around Ramakrishna. A new English translation of this by Swami Chetanananda is available.

However, the best known record of Ramakrishna's teachings is the Bengali *Kathamrita* written by Mahendranath Gupta. Swami Nikhilananda's translation of this into the English language, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, is the most widely read. In the preface to his translation, Nikhilananda states, "I have made a literal translation, omitting only a few pages of no particular interest to English-speaking readers." Some claim that Nikhilananda's omissions have led to Western difficulties in interpreting the *Kathamrita*.

Childhood: Gadadhar was born in the village of Kamarpukur, in what is now the Hooghly district of West Bengal. Gadadhar's parents, Khudiram and Chandramani, were poor and made ends meet with great difficulty. Gadadhar was extremely popular in his village. He was considered handsome and had a natural gift for the fine arts. He, however, disliked going to school, and was not interested in the pursuit of money. He loved nature and spent his time in fields and fruit gardens outside the village with his friends. He was

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seen visiting monks who stopped at his village on their way to Puri. He would serve them and listen with rapt attention to the religious debates they often had.

When arrangements for Gadadhar to be invested with the sacred thread (Upanayana) were nearly complete, he declared that he would have his first alms as a Brahmin from a certain Sudra woman of the village. This was a shock in the days when tradition required that the first alms be from a brahmin, but he was adamant. He said he had given his word to the lady and if he did not keep his word, what sort of Brahmin would he be? No argument, no appeal, no amount of tears are said to have budged him from his position. Finally, Ramkumar, his eldest brother and the head of the family after the passing away of their father, gave in.

Meanwhile, the family's financial position worsened every day. Ramkumar ran a Sanskrit school in Calcutta and also served as purohit priest in some families. About this time, a rich woman of Calcutta, Rani Rashmoni, founded a temple at Dakshineswar. She approached Ramkumar to serve as priest at the temple of Kali and Ramkumar agreed. After some persuasion, Gadadhar agreed to decorate the deity. When Ramkumar retired, Gadadhar took his place as priest.

Career as Priest: When Gadadhar started worshipping the deity Bhavatarini, he began to question if he was worshipping a piece of stone or a living Goddess. If he was worshipping a living Goddess, why should she not respond to his worship? This question nagged him day and night. Then, he began to pray to Kali:

> *"Mother, you've been gracious to many devotees in the past and have revealed yourself to them. Why would you not reveal yourself to me, also? Am I not also your son?"*

He is known to have wept bitterly and sometimes even cry out loudly while worshipping. At night, he would go into a nearby jungle and spend the whole night praying. One day, the famous account goes, he was so impatient to see Mother Kali that he decided to end his life. He seized a sword hanging on the wall and was about to strike himself with it, when he is reported to have seen light issuing from the deity in waves. He is said to have been soon overwhelmed by the waves and fell unconscious on the floor.

Gadadhar, however, unsatiated, prayed to Mother Kali for more religious experiences. He especially wanted to know the truths that other religions taught. Strangely, these teachers came to him when necessary and he is said to have reached the ultimate goals of those religions with ease. Soon word spread about this remarkable man and people of all denominations and all stations of life began to come to him.

Initiation: Ramakrishna was initiated in Advaita Vedanta by a wandering monk named Totapuri, in the city of Dakshineswar. Totapuri was "a teacher of masculine strength, a sterner mien, a gnarled physique, and a virile voice". Ramakrishna would soon affectionately address the monk as Nangta, the "Naked One", because as a sannyasin (renunciate) he did not wear any clothing.

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After the departure of Totapuri, RamakrisHna reportedly remained for six month in a state of absolute contemplations:

> *For six months in a stretch, I [Ramakrishna] remained in that state from which ordinary men can never return; generally the body falls off, after three weeks, like a sere leaf. I was not conscious of day or night. Flies would enter my mouth and nostrils as they do a dead's body, but I did not feel them. My hair became matted with dust.*

Married Life: Rumors spread to Kamarpukur that Ramakrishna had gone mad as a result of over-taxing spiritual exercises at Dakshineswar. Alarmed, neighbours advised Ramakrishna's mother that he be persuaded to marry, so that he might be more conscious of his responsibilities to the family. Far from objecting to the marriage, he, in fact, mentioned Jayrambati, three miles to the north-west of Kamarpukur, as being the village where the bride could be found at the house of one Ramchandra Mukherjee. The bride of six-years, Sarada, was found and the marriage was duly solemnised. Sarada was Ramakrishna's first disciple. He attempted to teach her everything he learnt from his various Gurus.

She is believed to have mastered every religious secret as quickly as Ramakrishna had. Impressed by her religious potential, he began to treat her as the Universal Mother Herself and performed a Puja considering Sarada as veritable Tripura Sundari Devi. He said, 'I look upon you as my own mother and the Mother who is in the temple'. Ramakrishna impressed upon Sarada Devi that she was not only the mother of his young disciples, but also of the entire humanity. Initially, Sarada Devi was shy about playing this role, but slowly, she filled it with courage.

Her r enunciation is believed by devotees to be a striking quality that she shared with her husband in a measure equal to, if not beyond, his. The true nature of their relationship and kinship was believed to be beyond the grasp of ordinary minds. Ramakrishna concluded, after close and constant association with her, that her relationship and attitude toward him were firmly based on a divine spiritual plane. Devotees believe that as they shared their lives, day and night, no other thought, other than that of the divine presence, arose in their minds. An account of such continued divine relationship between two souls of opposite gender is unique in religious records, not known in any of the past hagiographies. After the passing away of Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi became a religious teacher in her own rights.

Later Life: He soon came to be known as Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and like a magnet, is said to have begun to attract genuine seekers of God. He taught ceaselessly for fifteen years or so through parables, metaphors, songs and above all by his own life, the basic truths of religion. He had developed throat cancer and attained Mahasamadhi at a Garden House in Cassiopeia on 16 August, 1886, leaving behind a devoted band of 16 young disciples headed by the well-known saint-philosopher and orator, Swami

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Vivekananda and host of householder disciples. Among his contemporaries, Keshab Chandra Sen and Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who were known to be against Hindu idol-worship, were his admirers.

Teachings: Ramakrishna emphasised that God-realisation is the supreme goal of all living beings. Hence, for him, religion served as a means for the achievement of this goal. Ramakrishna's mystical realization, classified by Hindu tradition as nirvikalpa samadhi (literally, "constant meditation", thought to be absorption in the all-encompassing Consciousness), led him to believe that various religions are various ways to reach the Absolute, and that the Ultimate Reality could never be expressed in human terms. This is in agreement with the Rigvedic proclamation that "Truth is one but sages call it by many a name." As a result of this opinion, Ramakrishna actually spent periods of his life practising his own understandings of Islam, Christianity and various other Yogic and Tantric sects within Hinduism.

Devotees believe that Ramakrishna's realization of nirvikalpa samadhi also led him to an understanding of the two sides of maya (illusion), to which he referred as avidyamaya and vidyamaya: He explained that *avidyamaya* represents the dark forces of creation (eg. sensual desire, evil passions, greed, lust and cruelty), which keep the world system on lower planes of consciousness. These forces are responsible for human entrapment in the cycle of birth and death, and they must be fought and vanquished. *Vidyamaya*, on the other hand, represents the higher forces of creation (*e.g.* spiritual virtues, enlightening qualities, kindness, purity, love, and devotion), which elevate human beings to the higher planes of consciousness. With the help of vidyamaya, he said that devotees could rid themselves of avidyamaya and achieve the ultimate goal of becoming mayatita-that is, free from maya.

Ramakrishna's proclamation of *jatra jiv tatra Shiv* (wherever there is a living being, there is Shiva) stemmed from his Advaitic perception of Reality. This would lead him teach his disciples," Jive *daya noy, Shiv gyane jiv seba*" (not kindness to living beings, but serving the living being as Shiva Himself). This view differs considerably from the "sentimental pantheism" of Francis of Assisi.

Ramakrishna, though not formally trained as a philosopher, had an intuitive grasp of complex philosophical concepts. According to him the visible universe and many other universes (brahmanda) are mere bubbles emerging out of the all supreme ocean of intelligence (*Brahman*).

The key concepts in Ramakrishna's teachings were:

- the oneness of existence
- the divinity of all living beings
- the unity of God and the harmony of religions
- that the primal bondage in human life is lust and greed (*kamini* and *kanchana* in Bengali)

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A personal account of his life and teachings is recorded by his disciple, Mahendranath Gupta, simply known as "M", in *Kathamrita*. The account makes us aware of Ramakrishna's distinctive conversational style, his profuse employment of metaphors and parables, his characteristic wit and his frequent use of Bangla dialect words and idioms.

Like Adi Sankara had done more than a thousand years earlier, Ramakrishna Paramahansa revitalized Hinduism which had been fraught with excessive ritualism and superstition in the nineteenth century and helped it better respond to challenges from Islam, Christianity and the dawn of the modern era. However, unlike Adi Sankara Ramakrishna developed ideas about post-samadhi descent of consciousness into the phenomenal world, which he went on to term as *Vignana*. While he asserted the supreme validity of Advaita Vedanta, he also proclaimed that he accepts both the *Nitya* (Eternal Substratum) and the *Leela* (lit.play, indicating the dynamic Phenomenal Reality) as aspects of the Brahman.

The idea of the descent of consciousness shows the influence of the Bhakti movement and certain sub-schools of Shaktism on Ramakrishna's thought. The idea would later influence Aurobindo's views about the Divine Life on Earth.

Ramakrishna's Impact: Born as he was during a social upheaval in Bengal in particular and India in general, Ramakrishna and his movement was an important part of the direction that Hinduism and Indian nationalism took in the coming years.

On Hinduism: The Hindu Renaissance that India experienced in the 19th century may be said to have been spurred by his life and work. Although the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj preceded the Ramakrishna Mission, their influence was limited on a broader level. With the emergence of the Mission, however, the situation changed dramatically. The Ramakrishna Mission was founded by Ramakrishna himself when he had distributed the gerua cloth of renunciation to his direct disciples. This is corroborated by Swami Vivekananda himself when he says that without Thakur's grace all this would not have been possible. Many Ramakrishnites believe that Vivekananda acted as Ramakrishna's message-bearer to the West and hence helped in the fulfillment of their master's spiritual mission.

Hinduism faced a huge intellectual challenge in the 19th century, from Westerners and Indians alike. The Hindu practice of idol worship came under intense pressure specially in Bengal, then the center of British India, and was declared intellectually unsustainable. Response to this was varied, ranging from Young Bengal movement that denounced Hindusim and embraced Christianity or atheism, to the Brahmo movement that retained primacy of Hinduism but gave up idol worship, and to the staunch Hindu nationalism of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Ramakrishna's influence was crucial in this period for a Hindu revival of a more traditional kind, and can be compared to that of Chaitanya's contribution centuries earlier, when Hinduism in Bengal was under similar pressure from the growing power of Islam.

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It would be difficult to give a comprehensive description of Ramakrishna's influence on Hinduism, being as deep as it is, but some important contributions of his can nevertheless be detected. In his worship of Mother Kali's murti, he questions the crux of idol worship-whether he is worshipping a piece of stone or a living Goddess and why she does not respond to his prayers. He is reassured several times by experiences that show him that she is present. To the many that revered him, this reinforced centuries old traditions that were in glaring spotlight at the time. Ramakrishna also touted an inclusive version of the religion, declaring *Joto mot toto path*. In Bangla, this roughly means *Every opinion yields a path*. He adopted a name that is clearly Vaishnavite (Rama and Krishna are both incarnations of Vishnu), but was a devotee of Kali, the mother Goddess, and known to have followed various other religious paths including Tantrism and even Christianity and Islam.

On Indian Nationalism: Ramakrishna's impact on the growing Indian nationalism was, if more indirect, nevertheless quite notable. A large number of intellectuals of that age had regular communication with him and respected him, though not all of them necessarily agreed with him on religious matters. Numerous members of the Brahmo Samaj respected him. Though some of them embraced his form of Hinduism, the fact that many others didn't shows that they detected in him a possibility for a strong national identity in the face of a colonial adversary that was intellectually undermining the Indian civilization. A similar statement could be made about the fact that Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Ramakrishna held each other in high esteem, in spite of the fact that the first was a declared atheist.

Sarada Devi

Born: 1853

Died: 1920

The affectionate term "Holy Mother" refers to Sarada Devi (1853-1920), Ramakrishna's wife and spiritual counterpart. According to the custom then prevalent in India, she was betrothed to him while still a child. At the age of 18, she left her parental home to join her husband, who lived some sixty miles away, near Calcutta.

By that time Ramakrishna had dedicated his body and mind to the spiritual search and lived the life of a monk. Yet he received Sarada very kindly, feeling that Divine Providence had brought her. After nursing her to recovery from an illness contracted on the journey, Ramakrishna one day asked her why she had come to join him. She replied that she had come only to help him in his chosen way, which as she well knew meant the way of complete renunciation of all earthly ties for the sake of God-realization. Thus, instead of seeking conjugal fulfillment, she became his first disciple.

Sarada Devi was a spiritual and intellectual leader in her own right. She served Ramakrishna and his disciples for many years. After Ramakrishna's passing away, she

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carried on his religious ministry, serving as guide and inspiration of the new spiritual movement. Although by all accounts she was a modest and self-effacing woman, the movement started by Ramakrishna continued to grow in prominence and become quite influential in the waning days of British colonial rule. Swami Vivekananda, because he was a man and because of his family background, perhaps had more of an impact politically back in Calcutta, but Sarada Devi remained the head of the religious community in Dakshineswar. Before his death, Ramakrishna encouraged his disciples to treat her as if she were their mother, paralleling the role of Kali as the mother of humanity. She nurtured them accordingly, helping with personal matters. Moreover, she was an important interpreter and teacher of Ramakrishna's thinking for all comers.

Quotes

- "I am the mother of the righteous, I am the mother of the wicked as well. Never fear. Whenever you are in distress, just say to yourself 'I have a mother.'"
- "I tell you one thing. If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own."
- "God is one's very own. The more intensely a person practices spiritual disciplines, the more quickly he attains to God."
- "Never fear. He is ever looking after you. Do His work and practice Sadhana. A little work daily drives away idle thoughts from the mind."
- "Call on the Lord who pervades the entire universe. He will shower His blessings upon you."
- "The mind is rendered pure as a result of much austerities. God who is purity itself cannot be attained without austerities."

Swami Vivekananda

Vivekananda, Ramakrishna's most illustrious disciple, is considered by some to be one of his most important legacies.

Please expand and improve this section as described on this article's talk page or at Requests for expansion, then remove this message.

Contemporary Influence: It could be argued that Ramakrishna's vision of Hinduism, and its popularisation by western converts like Christopher Isherwood, have largely coloured Western notions of what Hinduism is. Some, like Andrew Harvey and Ken Wilber, see the beginning of a new planetary consciousness with Ramakrishna's life.

Religious scholar Jeffrey Kripal has written a controversial psychoanalytic study of Ramakrishna entitled *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna*. The book theorizes upon an alleged homoerotic strain in Ramakrishna's life, sadhana and philosophy. It has been criticized by the Ramakrishna Mission and other

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followers as being based on many mistranslations of primary sources, deceptions, and an incorrect use of psychoanalysis as a tool in forming the theory.

Historian Narasingha Sil has also written an account of Ramakrishna that acknowledges Ramnakrishna's sexuality and which contradicts the accounts endorsed by the Ramakrishna Mission.

12 January 1863 Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Died: 4 July, 1902 Belur Math near Kolkata

Swami Vivekananda (Bengali: *Shami Bibekanondo*), whose pre-monastic name was Narendranath Dutta (*Nôrendronath Dotto*) (January 12, 1863-July 4, 1902) was one of the most famous and influential spiritual leaders of the Vedanta philosophy. He was the chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and was the founder of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Many consider him an icon for his fearless courage, his positive exhortations to the youth, his broad outlook on social problems, and countless lectures and discourses on Vedanta philosophy.

Birth and Early Life: Narendranath Dutta was born in Shimla Pally, Kolkata, West Bengal, India on January 12, 1863 as the son of Viswanath Dutta and Bhuvaneswari Devi. Even as he was young, he showed a precocious mind and keen memory. He practiced meditation from a very early age. While at school, he was good at studies, as well as games of various kinds. He organised an amateur theatrical company and a gymnasium and took lessons in fencing, wrestling, rowing and other sports. He also studied instrumental and vocal music. He was a leader among his group of friends. Even when he was young, he questioned the validity of superstitious customs and discrimination based on caste and religion.

In 1879, Narendra entered the Presidency College, Calcutta for higher studies. After one year, he joined the Scottish Church College, Calcutta and studied philosophy. During the course, he studied western logic, western philosophy and history of European nations.

Questions started to arise in young Narendra's mind about God and the presence of God. This made him associate with the Brahmo Samaj, an important religious movement of the time, led by Keshab Chandra Sen. But the Samaj's congregational prayers and devotional songs could not satisfy Narendra's zeal to realise God. He would ask leaders of Brahmo Samaj whether they have seen God. He never got a satisfying answer. It was during this time that Professor Hastie of Scottish Church College told him about Sri Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar.

With Ramakrishna: Narendra met Ramakrishna for the first time in November 1881. He asked Ramakrishna the same old question, whether he had seen God. The instantaneous answer from Ramakrishna was, *"Yes, I see God, just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense."* Narendra was astounded and puzzled. He could feel the man's words were honest and uttered from depths of experience. He started visiting Ramakrishna

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frequently. Though Narendra could not accept Ramakrishna and his visions, he could not neglect him. It had always been in Narendra's nature to test something thoroughly before he could accept it. He tested Ramakrishna to the maximum, but the master was patient, forgiving, humorous, and full of love. He never asked Narendra to abandon reason, and he faced all of Narendra's arguments and examinations with infinite patience. In time, Narendra accepted Ramakrishna, and while he accepted, his acceptance was whole-hearted. While Ramakrishna predominantly taught duality and Bhakti to his other disciples, he taught Narendra the Advaita Vedanta, the philosophy of non-dualism.

During the course of five years of his training under Ramakrishna, Narendra was transformed from a restless, puzzled, impatient youth to a mature man who was ready to renounce everything for the sake of God-realization. Soon, Ramakrishna's end came in the form of throat cancer in August 1886. After this Narendra and a core group of Ramakrishna's disciples took vows to become monks and renounce everything, and started living in a supposedly haunted house in Baranagore. They took alms to satisfy their hunger and their other needs were taken care of by Ramakrishna's richer householder disciples.

Wanderings in India: Soon, the young monks of Baranagore wanted to live the life of a wandering monk with rags and a begging bowl and no other possessions. On July 1890, Vivekananda set out for a long journey, without knowing where the journey would take him. The journey that followed took him to the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent. During these days, Vivekananda assumed various names like Vividishananda, Satchidananda, etc., It is said that he was given the name *Vivekananda* by Maharaja of Khetri for his discernment of things, good and bad.

During these wandering days, Vivekananda stayed on king's palaces, as well as the huts of the poor. He came in close contact with the culture of different regions of India and various classes of people in India. Vivekananda observed the imbalance in society and tyranny in the name of caste. He realised the need for a national rejuvenation if India was to survive at all. He reached Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent on 24 December, 1892. There, he swam across the sea and started meditating on a lone rock. He thus meditated for three days and said later that he meditated about the past, present and future of India. The rock went on to become the Vivekananda memorial at Kanyakumari.

Vivekananda went to Madras and spoke about his plans for India and Hinduism to the young men of Madras. They were impressed by the monk and urged him to go to the United States and represent Hinduism in the World Parliament of Religions. Thus, helped by his friends at Madras, Raja of Ramnad and Maharajas of Mysore and Khetri, Vivekananda set out on his journey to the USA.

In the West: Vivekananda was received well at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Illinois, where he delivered a series of lectures. He also earned wild applause

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for beginning his address with the famous words, *"Sisters and brothers of America."* Vivekananda's arrival in the USA has been identified by many to mark the beginning of western interest in Hinduism not as merely an exotic eastern oddity, but as a vital religious and philosophical tradition that might actually have something important to teach the West. Within a few years of the Parliament, he had started Vedantic centres in New York City, New York and London, lectured at major universities and generally kindled western interest in Hinduism. His success was not without controversy, much of it from Christian missionaries of whom he was fiercely critical. After four years of constant touring, lecturing and retreats in the West, he came back to India in the year 1897.

Back in India: Admirers and devotees of Vivekananda gave him an enthusiastic reception on his return to India. In India, he delivered a series of lectures, and this set of lectures known as "Lectures from Colombo to Almora" is considered to have uplifted the morale of the then downtrodden Indian society. He founded the Ramakrishna Mission. This institution is now one of the largest monastic orders of Hindu society in India.

However, he had to bear great criticism from other orthodox Hindus for having travelled in — what they perceived to be — the impure West. His contemporaries also questioned his motives, wondering whether the fame and glory of his Hindu evangelism compromised his original monastic vows. His enthusiasm for America and Britain, and his spiritual devotion to his motherland, caused significant tension in his last years.

Death: On July 4, 1902 at Belur Math near Kolkata, he taught Vedanta philosophy to some pupils in the morning. He had a walk with Swami Premananda, a brother-disciple and gave him instructions concerning the future of the Ramakrishna Math. In the evening he went for meditation in his room facing the Ganga and died in Mahasamadhi.

Principles and Philosophy: Vivekananda was a renowned thinker in his own right. One of his most important contributions was to demonstrate how Advaitin thinking is not merely philosophically far-reaching, but how it also has social, even political, consequences. One important lesson he claimed to receive from Ramakrishna was that "Jiva is Shiva " (each individual is divinity itself). This became his Mantra, and he coined the concept of *daridra narayana seva*-the service of God in and through (poor) human beings. *If there truly is the unity of Brahman underlying all phenomena, then on what basis do we regard ourselves as better or worse, or even as better-off or worse-off, than others?* This was the question he posed to himself. Ultimately, he concluded that these distinctions fade into nothingness in the light of the oneness that the devotee experiences in Moksha. What arises then is compassion for those "individuals" who remain unaware of this oneness and a determination to help them.

Swami Vivekananda belonged to that branch of Vedanta that held that no one can be truly free until all of us are. Even the desire for personal salvation has to be given up, and only tireless work for the salvation of others is the true mark of the enlightened person. He founded the Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission on the principle of Atmano

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Mokshartham Jagad-hitaya cha. (for one's own salvation and for the welfare of the World). However, Vivekananda also pleaded for a strict separation between religion and government ("church and state"). Although social customs had been formed in the past with religious sanction, it was not now the business of religion to interfere with matters such as marriage, inheritance and so on. The ideal society would be a mixture of Brahmin knowledge, Kshatriya culture, Vaisya efficiency and the egalitarian Shudra ethos. Domination by any one led to different sorts of lopsided societies. Vivekananda did not feel that religion, nor, any force for that matter, should be used forcefully to bring about an ideal society, since this was something that would evolve naturally by individualistic change when the conditions were right.

Vivekanda advised his followers to be holy, unselfish and have shraddha (faith). He encouraged the practise of Brahmacharya (Celibacy). In one of the conversations with his childhood friend *Sri Priya Nath Sinha* he attributes his physical and mental strengths, eloquence to the practice of brahmacharya.

Vivekananda didn't advocate the emerging area of parapsychology, astrology (one instance can be found in his speech *Man the Maker of his Destiny*, *Complete-Works, Volume 8, Notes of Class Talks and Lectures*) saying that this form of curiosity doesn't help in spiritual progress but actually hinders it.

Many years after his death, Rabindranath Tagore (a prominent member of the Brahmo Samaj) had said: *If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.* Incidentally, in the earlier years Tagore did not have much respect for Swami Vivekananda for his idol-worshipping. On the other hand, Vivekananda was not particularly impressed by Tagore, though he had been interacting with Tagore's father Maharshi Debendra Nath. Vivekananda was a very good singer and used to sing lots of *Bhajans*, including about twelve written and composed by Tagore.

Mahatma Gandhi who strived for a lot of reform in Hinduism himself, said: *Swami Vivekananda's writings need no introduction from anybody. They make their own irresistible appeal.*

Though it may not be obvious, Swami Vivekananda inspired India's freedom struggle movement. His writings inspired a whole generation of freedom fighters, in Bengal in particular and India at large. Most prominent among them are Subhash Chandra Bose and Aurobindo Ghosh.

Sri Aurobindo, actually considered *Swamiji* as his mentor. While in Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo used to be visited by Swami Vivekananda in his meditation. *Swamiji* guided Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

> *Vivekananda was a soul of ruissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men, but the definitive work he has left behind is quite incommensurate with our impression of his creative might and energy. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where,*

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in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intutive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India and we say, "Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children. —*Sri Aurobindo—1915 in Vedic Magazine.*

Abroad, he had some interactions with Max Mueller and Romain Rolland. The latter also wrote a book in 1930 entitled *Vie de Vivekananda (Life of Vivekananda)*. Nikola Tesla was one of those influenced by the Vedic philosophy teachings of the Swami Vivekananda.

Works: His books (compiled from lectures given around the world) on the four Yogas (Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga) are very influential and still seen as fundamental texts for anyone interested in the Hindu practice of Yoga. His letters are of great literary and spiritual value. He was also a very good singer and a poet. He had composed many songs including his favorite *Kali the Mother*. He used humor for his teachings and was also an excellent cook. His language is very free flowing. His own Bengali writings stand testimony to the fact that he believed that words-spoken or written should be for making things easier to understand rather than show off the speaker or writer's knowledge.

Quotes

"Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy-by one, or more, or all of these-and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."

"The one theme of the Vedanta philosophy is the search after unity. The Hindu mind does not care for the particular; it is always after the general, nay, the universal. "what is it that by knowing which everything else is to be known." That is the one search."

"Look upon every man, woman, and everyone as God. You cannot help anyone, you can only serve: serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege."

"It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body — to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God."

"Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best."

" So long as even a single dog in my country is without food, my whole religion will be to feed it."

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"This is the gist of all worship-to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Siva (Hindu God) in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Siva, and if he sees Siva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Siva in him, without thinking of his caste, creed, or race, or anything, with him Siva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples."

"Aye , who ever saw money make the man? It is man that always make money. The whole world has been made by the energy of man, by the power of enthusiasm, by the power of faith."

"It is a tremendous error to feel helpless. Do not seek help from anyone. We are our own help. If we cannot help ourselves, there is none to help us."

" All power is within you, you can do anything and everything. Believe in that, do not believe that you are weak... You can do anything and everything, without even the guidance of any one. All power is there. Stand up and express the divinity with you... Arise, awake, sleep no more. With each of you there is the power to remove all wants and all miseries. Believe in this, that power will be manifested. "

"On this basic-begin right and doing right the whole world can unite."

The turbán that Vivekananda used to wear is generally believed to be suggested by Maharaja of Khetri. But some people claim that Vivekananda visited the Swamithope Pathi during his visit to Kanyakumari in December 1892 and believe that he was impressed by the principles behind rituals of this monistic faith, such as wearing a head gear during worship in temple, worshipping in front of mirror etc., and started wearing a turban from then on. Some also suggest that Vivekananda received some spiritual instructions from the disciples of Ayya Vaikundar. There is no mention of this in Vivekananda's biographies or works. It is also said that while he was a child, he was impressed by the turban of the horse cab driver, who used to ferry his father on his daily work. Subsequently when he renounced the world and took to sanyasa, he started using one himself.

Trivia

- Swami Vivekananda was the first Indian to be invited to accept the chair of Oriental Philosophy at Harvard University.
- Jamshedji Tata set up the Tata Institute or the Indian Institute of Science on the Swami's advice and he was offered the post of Director for the Institute which he declined.
- India celebrates *National Youth Day* on his birthday

Narayana Guru (1856-1928)

Narayan Guru was a great sage and social reformer of India. Born in *Ezhava/Thiyya* (Ezhavas were a middle rung caste and have to face social injustices), he revolted against

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the brahminical dominance and thereby transformed the social face of Kerala. Narayana Guru is revered for his *Vedic* knowledge, poetic proficiency, openness to the views of others, non-violent philosophy and most importantly his unrelenting resolve to set aright social wrongs. Narayana Guru was instrumental in setting the spiritual foundations for social reform in the current State of Kerala (erstwhile states of Travancore, Kochi and Malabar district of British India) and was one of the most successful social reformers who tackled caste in India. He demonstrated a path to social emancipation without invoking the dualism of the opressed and the opressor.

In contrast to certain other reformers who criticized Brahmins and upper caste Hindus for the conditions of the lower castes, Narayana Guru stressed on the upliftment of a community through its own efforts by the establishment of schools and temples. In the process he brushed aside the Hindu religious conventions based upon *Chaturvarna*. His transformation of the social face of Kerala relied on emphasizing the Advaita philosophy of Sankara.

Early Life: The Guru was born at Chempazhanthi, a small village near Thiruvananthapuram, circa 1856. As the only son of his parents, who had three daughters, the young boy was named Nanu (shortname for *Narayana*). The small thatched house where Nanu was born is preserved to date as a historic monument. Nanu's father Madan Auan, of the *Valyalvarathu* joint family, was a Sanskrit teacher knowledgeable in astrology, Ayurvedic medicine and the epics of Hinduism. Nanu's uncle Krishnan Vaidyan was a reputed Ayurvedic physician and Sanskrit scholar. Nanu is said to have been initiated into traditional formal education *Ezhuthinirithal* under Chempazhanthi Pillai, a local schoolmaster and village officer. Besides schooling, young Nanu continued to be educated at home, under the guidance of his father and his uncle Krishnan Vaidyan, where he was taught basics of the Tamil and Sanskrit languages and traditional subjects such as *Siddharupam*, *Balaprobhodhanam* and *Amarakoœam*.

Biographical accounts talk of Nanu as a reticent and intelligent boy who was intensely drawn to devout worship at the *Manackal* temple adjacent to the *Valyalvarathu* home. The boy Nanu is also said to have many a times challenged his own relatives for social discrimination and the apartheid-like practices of segregation of children of, supposedly, lower castes in his times. He is also said to have preferred solitude, to be immersed in thought, and to have shown a strong aptitude for rhyme and reason, composing his own hymns and singing them in praise of God. Having lost his mother around the age of 15, Nanu is thought to have spent most of his teenage assisting both his father, with tutoring, and his uncle in the practice of Ayurvedic medicine whilst also self-indulging in intense devotional practices at temples nearby.

Transformation as Master, Yogi and Seeker of Truth: At the age of 21 young Nanu was sent for further education under an eminent scholar Kummampilli Raman Pillai Auan of Karunagapalli. Living as a guest in a prominent family house *Varanapallil* near

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Kayankulam, Nanu, along with other students, was tutored by this scholar in subjects like advanced Sanskrit Language and Poetry, Drama and Literary Criticism, and Logical Rhetoric.

Around the age of 25, Nanu returned to his village after which he was off and on involved in running a village school for children. His role as a teacher gained him the name Nanu Auan (Auan meaning a master or teacher). Whilst teaching and also experimenting with truth, through self-study and his own experiences with life, Nanu Auan moved on foot to places in the vicinity, often spending time in the confines of temples, writing poems and hymns and lecturing to village folk on philosophy and moral values.

Though married, through an initiative by his sisters, Nanu Auan was not inclined towards a married life, nor is much known about his marital life, which would have ended with the increasing intensity of his spiritual inclination and drifting as a wandering ascetic in search of truth, as did Gautama Buddha.

During his meandering days, at the house of another Sanskrit scholar and old classmate, Perunalli Krishnan Vidayar, Nanu Auan got introduced to many learned men and peers, including Kunjan Pilla, who was destined to become his spiritual guide and soulmate Chattampi Swamikal. Kunjan Pilla, who discovered and appreciated Nanu Auan's philosophical genius and passion for Yoga, introduced Nanu Auan to a master of Yogic practices by name Thycaud Ayyavu. Under the Yogi Thycaud Ayyavu, Nanu Auan mastered various Yogic practices including Hatha Yoga. The exposure gained from this scholastic experience had a lasting impact on the later life and philosophy of Narayana Guru.

Enlightenment and its Poetic Expression: It is uncertain as to when precisely Nanu Auan moved to his hermitage deep inside the hilly forest area in Maruthwamala, where he is said to have subjected himself to the most austere life immersed in meditative thought, other rigorous yoga practices and extreme sustenance rituals. After an unpretentious life of over thirty years abounding in knowledge and harsh experiences, this epoch is considered the culmination of the meditative recluse; the point at which Narayana Guru is believed to have attained a state of Enlightenment, *i.e.* an absolute state of wisdom or awakening.

Narayana Guru's later literary and philosophical masterpiece *Atmopadeœa satakam (one hundred verses of self-instruction, written in Malayalam circa 1897)* is considered a fertile poetic expression, encapsulating the Guru's philosophy of egalitarianism, emanating from the author's attainment of an experienced state of primordial knowledge and quintessence of the Universe; and his ensuing ability to view the human race, from a dignified and elevated perspective, as nothing but one of a genus, in unqualified equality and without any racial, religious, caste or other discriminations whatsoever.

Consecration of Siva Lingam at Aruvippuram: During his wandering life he happened to be at Aruvippuram in 1888. In the month of March that year, because of the request from local people who had no privileges to enter into Hindu temples, he decided

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to build a place of worship. He picked up a stone from a nearby river (Neyyar) and used it as an idol for the proposed temple and consecrated it. This in itself was revolutionary step for according to some of the Hindu scriptures, only brahmins can consecrate a temple. To the brahmins who questioned his right to do so, he replied that what he consecrated was an *Ezhava Siva*. Those who questioned the timing of the consecration saying it was not an astrologically auspicious time, he replied: *Horoscope is to be cast after the birth of a child, not before*. He instructed to place a plaque containing a motto on the temple wall which read as:

Devoid of dividing walls
Of caste or race
Or hatred of rival faith,
We all live here
In Brotherhood,
Such, know this place to be!
This Model Foundation!

A new phase began in the Guru's life in 1904. He decided to give up his wandering life and settle down in a place to continue his Sadhana (spiritual practice) he choose Sivagiri, twenty miles to the north of Thiruvananthapuram. Goddess 'Amba' became his deity of worship.

Next, he started a Sanskrit school in Varkala. Poor boys and orphans were taken under his care. They were given education regardless of caste distinctions. Temples were built at different places-Trichur, Kannur, Anjuthengu, Tellicherry, Calicut, Mangalore. A temple was built for Sharada Devi in 1912, at Sivagiri. Worship at such temples helped to reduce to a large extent superstitious beliefs and practices.

In 1913, he founded an Ashram at Alwaye. It was called *Advaita Ashram*. This was an important event in his spiritual quest. That Ashram was dedicated to a great principle-*Om Sahodaryam Sarvatra* (all men are equal in the eyes of God). This became the motto of the new Ashram.

When Narayana Guru attained the age of sixty, his birth day was observed throughout the west-coast from Mangalore to Sri Lanka. Between the years 1918 and 1923 he visited and taught in Sri Lanka. In 1921, a Conference of Universal Brotherhood was held at Alwaye. Again in 1924, a conference of all religions was held at Alwaye. The Guru stressed the need for a *Brahma Vidyalaya* for a comparative study of different religious faiths.

Sree Narayana Guru has many followers and disciples. Nataraja Guru, a notable disciple of Sree Narayana Guru, introduced Guru's visions and ideals to the western world. He established Narayana Gurukulamin 1923 at the Nilgiris with the blessings of Narayana Guru.

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Narayana Guru's Philosophy: After a span of a millennium since the time of Adi Shankara, Sree Narayana Guru was the next greatest proponent and re-evaluator of Advaita Vedanta and hailing from the same geographic region, *i.e.*, present-day Kerala. Narayana Guru's philosophy, which is fundamentally of Advaitic and non-dual wisdom in principles, further extended Advaita concepts into practical modes of self-realisation through spiritual education, compassion and vision for peaceful co-existence of the human race, whilst promoting social equality and universal brotherhood. His philosophy of non-violence and ahimsa strongly denounced discrimination in the name of caste or religion, and emphasised focusing on education and private enterprise for the ongoing uplift of the quality of life. The Guru's philosophy emphasised the consistency between true existence of the "common reality" on Earth and one Divine behind the creation and sustenance of the Universe, dismissing any concepts of illusory worlds or any mid-way "city on high".

The Guru's philosophy is exemplified in his mystical writings that are truly interchanging warps and wefts of ethics, logic, aesthetics and metaphysics woven into masterpieces of silken rich poetry. The Guru's literary works are in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil languages, and these works are of a conceptual and aesthetic quality at par with the Upanishads.

At the time of its conception, Narayana Guru's philosophy was in many respects ahead of its time and focused on a futuristic world order that could be shaped from his philosophical connotations that are underlain with transcendental aesthetics and logic embodied in knowledge and pure reason. Most of the serious scholars of Narayana Guru's philosophy have been from generations beyond his lifetime; and this list keeps growing.

Rationalism and Atheism: Although Narayana Guru had built a number of temples and composed many poems in praise of popular Hindu deities, he had many atheist followers. This shows his love for humanity as a whole which is irrespective of any faith based affiliations. Many of his atheist followers in fact considered him as an atheist1. For instance, one of his prominent disciples Sahodaran Ayyappan was a militant atheist and one of the founders of Yukthivadi, the first rationalist/atheist magazine in Malayalam. When Sahodaran Ayyappan modified Narayana Guru's famous catch phrase, *Oru Jati, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam Manushyanu* (One Caste, One Religion, One God for Humanbeing) and re-written it as *Jati Venda, Matham Venda, Daivam Venda Manushyanu* (No Caste, No Religion, No God for Humanbeing), the latter did not protest2.

Casteism prevalent amongst the Hindus even in the first half of 20th century was so rabid that uppercaste people refused to have food along with the people belonging to lower caste and "untouchable" communities. Hindu scriptures were profusely quoted by them to justify this practice. The Ezhava community in which Narayana Guru was born too was not immune to this barbaric practice even after half-a-century of Narayana Guru's work. When Sahodaran Ayyappan inspired by Narayanaguru's message of caste-less and creedless society launched what is called *"Panthibhojanam"* or community feasts participating people belonging to various castes and communities, the Ezhava lords called

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him *"Pulayanaiappan"* (*Pulaya* was used as a derogatory term for having feast with the *"Pulayas"*, an "untouchable" community in the caste-hierarchy of Hinduism) and tried to forcibly prevent the feast. It was in this context that Narayana Guru came out in support of Sahodaran Ayyappan and sent the message reproduced alongside. Translated into English, the message reads: *"Whatever be one's religion, costume, language etc., since their caste is the same, there is nothing wrong in having inter-marriages and community feasts"*. It is this message of Narayanaguru which transgresses the established canons of Hindu religion (or any religion for that matter) that makes Narayanaguru a rationalist icon.

To avoid the attempts made by a section of his followers to identify him with Hinduism alone, Narayana Guru was forced to state explicitly that he did not belong to any religious sects. Through a message he sent in the year 1916, he proclaimed : *It is years since I left castes and religions. Yet some people think that I belong to their religion. That is not correct. I do not belong to any particular caste or religion.*

Some other prominent rationalist/atheist leaders, apart from Sahodaran Ayyappan, associated with Narayana Guru were M.C. Joseph, C.V. Kunhiraman and Mithavadi Krishnan.

Works by Narayana Guru

In Malayalam: 1. Swanubavageethi , 2. Atmopadesa Satakam , 3. Advaitha Deepika, 4. Arivu, 5. Daiva Desakam, 6. Jeevakarunya Panchakam, 7. Anukamba Dasakam, 8. Jathi Nirnayam, 9. Jathi Lakshanam, 10. Sadacharam, 11. Chijanda Chinthakam, 12. Daiva Chintanam-1 & 2, 13. Athma Vilasam.

In Sanskrit: 1. Darsana Mala, 2. Brahmavidya Panchakam, 3. Nirvruthi Panchakam, 4. Slokathrayi, 5. Vedantha Suthram, 6. Homa Manthram, 7. Municharya Panchakam, 8. Asramam, 9. Dharmam, 10. Charama Slokangal, 11. Homa Mantram, 12. Chidambarashtakam, 13. Guhashtakam, 14. Bhadrakaliashtakam, 15. Vinayaka Ashtakam, 16. Sree Vasudeva Ashtakam, 17. Navamanjari.

In Tamil: 1. Thevarappathinkangal.

Translations: 1. Thirukural, 2. Isavasyo Upanishad.

Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo (Bangla: *Sri Orobindo* Sanskrit: *Sri Aravinda*) (August 15, 1872–December 5, 1950) was an Indian nationalist, scholar, poet, mystic, evolutionary philosopher, yogi and guru. His followers further believe that he was an avatar, an incarnation of the Absolute.

Sri Aurobindo spent his life — through his vast writings and through his own development — working for the freedom of India, the path to the further evolution of life on earth, and to bring down what he called the Supermind to enable such progress. He referred to his teachings as the "integral yoga".

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Early Experiences: Sri Aurobindo was born Aurobindo Akroyd Ghose (pronounced and often written as Ghosh) in Kolkata (Calcutta), India, on 15th August, 1872. His father was Dr. K. D. Ghose and his mother Swarnalata Devi. Dr. Ghose, who had lived in Britain, and had studied at Aberdeen University, was determined that his children should have a completely European upbringing, sent Aurobindo and his siblings to the *Loreto Convent School* at Darjeeling. At the age of seven Aurobindo was taken along with his two elder brothers, Manmohan and Benoybhusan, to England. There, they were placed with a clergyman and his wife, a Mr and Mrs. Drewett, at Manchester. Mr. and Mrs. Drewett tutored Aurobindo privately. Mr. Drewett, himself a capable scholar, grounded Aurobindo so well in Latin that Aurobindo was able to gain admission into St Paul's School in London. At St. Paul's Aurobindo mastered Greek and excelled at Latin. The last three years at St. Paul's were spent in reading, especially English Poetry. At St. Paul's he received the Butterworth Prize for literature, the Bedford Prize for history and a scholarship to King's College, Cambridge University. He returned to India in 1893.

During the First Partition of Bengal from 1905 to 1912, he became a leader of the group of Indian nationalists known as the Extremists for their willingness to use violence and advocate outright independence, a plank more moderate nationalists had shied away from up to that point. He was one of the founders of Jugantar party, an underground revolutionary outfit. He was the editor of a nationalist Bengali newspaper *Vande Mataram* (spelt and pronounced as *Bônde Matôrom* in the Bengali language) and came into frequent confrontation with the British Raj as a result. In 1907 attended a convention of Indian nationalists where he was seen as the new leader of the movement. But his life was beginning to take a new direction. In Baroda he met a Maharashtrian yogi called *Vishnu Bhaskar Lele* who convinced him to explore the ancient Hindu practices of yoga.

It was at this point that Rabindranath Tagore paid him a visit and wrote the now famous lines:

> *Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee! O friend, my country's friend,*
> *O Voice incarnate, free, Of India's soul....The fiery messenger that with the*
> *lamp of God Hath come...Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee.*

Final Conversion: His final conversion from an active nationalist into a profound sage and seer occurred while incarcerated for a year in the Alipur jail in Kolkata in the province of Bengal. While incarcerated he was inspired by his meditating on the famed Hindu scripture of the Bhagavad Gita.

While in Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo claimed to be visited by the renowned Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu philosopher of great importance to Advaita Vedanta, in his meditation. The swami guided Sri Aurobindo's yoga and helped him to scale great heights. It was there Sri Aurobindo saw the convicts, jailers, policemen, the prison bars, the trees, the judge, the lawyer etc., in the experience and realization of Vasudeva, a form of Vishnu. Sri Aurobindo was even able to see compassion, honesty and charity in the hearts of

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murderers. The trial for which he was incarcerated was one of the important trials in Indian nationalism movement.

There were 49 accused and 206 witnesses. 400 documents were filed and 5000 exhibits were produced including bombs, revolvers and acid. The English judge, C.B. Beechcroft, had been a student with Sri Aurobindo at Cambridge. The Chief Prosecutor Eardley Norton displayed a loaded revolver on his briefcase during the trial. The case for Sri Aurobindo was taken up by Chittaranjan Das. Chittaranjan Das, in his conclusion to the Judge, said: "... My appeal to you is this, that long after the controversy will be hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation will have ceased, long after he (Sri Aurobindo) is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed, not only in India, but across distant seas and lands. Therefore, I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this Court, but before the bar of the High Court of History." The trial ("Alipore Bomb Case, 1908") lasted for one full year. Aurobindo was acquitted.

Afterwards Aurobindo started two new weeklies: the *Karmayogin* in English and the *Dharma* in Bengali. However, it appeared that the British government would not tolerate his nationalist program as Lord Minto wrote about him: *I can only repeat that he is the most dangerous man we have to reckon with.*

Sought again by the Indian police he was guided to the French settlements and on April 4, 1910 he finally found refuge with other nationalists in the French colony of Pondicherry.

In 1914 after four years of concentrated yoga at Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo launched *Arya*, a 64 page monthly review. For the next six and a half years this became the vehicle for most of his most important writings, which appeared in serialised form. These included *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on The Gita*, *The Secret of The Veda*, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, *The Upanishads*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *War and Self-determination*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and *The Future Poetry*. Sri Aurobindo however revised some of these works before they were published in book form.

He also wrote a very small book entitled "THE MOTHER" which was first published in 1928. In a way, it is the "Instructions Manual" for "Sadhaka"-aspirant-the "Yogi"-of the "Integral Yoga". In this book (less then 16 full size pages), the "Seer of the Modern Age" has written about his "Seeing" the Supreme Divine Mother-The Divine Shakti; especially "Four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities (which) have stood in front in her guidance of the Universe and her dealings with the terrestrial play. ...". He clearly and very explicitly wrote the conditions to be fulfilled by the "Sadhaka" for receiving the Grace of the Divine Mother for the "... great transmutation". He is probably the only Spiritual Master who has very clearly and emphatically written about Money/Wealth. ".... This is indeed one of the three forces-power, wealth, sex-that

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have the strongest attraction for the human ego and.....". After this prolific output, Sri Aurobindo's only literary works, apart from some poems and essays, was his epic poem *Savitri*, which he continued to revise for the rest of his life. However, following his retirement from public life in 1926, he maintained a voluminous correspondence with his disciples. His letters, most of which were written in the 1930s, numbered in the several thousands, and some of these were later published in three volumes as *Letters on Yoga*.

Although Sri Aurobindo wrote most of his material in English, his major works were later translated into a number of languages, including the Indian languages Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati, Marathi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam, as well as French, German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, Slovene and Russian. A large amount of his work in Russian translation is also available online.

The Mother: His closest collaborator in his yoga, Mirra Richard (nee Alfassa), was known as *The Mother*. She was born in Paris on February 21, 1878, to Turkish and Egyptian parents. Involved in the cultural and spiritual life of Paris, she counted among her friends Alexandra David-Neel. She went to Pondicherry on March 29, 1914, finally settling there in 1920. Sri Aurobindo considered her his equal and because of her astuteness as an organiser, left it to her to plan, run and build the growing ashram. After November 24, 1926, when Sri Aurobindo retired into seclusion, she supervised the organization of the ashram, the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (which, with its pilot experiments in the field of education, very much impressed observers like Jawaharlal Nehru), and later institutes like Auroville, the international township near the town of Pondicherry. She became the leader of the community after Sri Aurobindo died; she is revered by followers of Sri Aurobindo as well. Executing the mandate she received from her Guru, she did not leave Pondicherry till her last breath on November 17, 1973. She was to play an active role in the merger of the French pockets in India and, according to Sri Aurobindo's wish, to make of Pondicherry a seat of cultural exchange between India and France.

The Mother's attempts to bring the new consciousness into life and her personal effort of physical transformation of her own body are described in the 13-volume series of books known as The Agenda.

Contribution to Indian Philosophy: One of Sri Aurobindo's main philosophical achievements was to introduce the concept of evolution into Vedantic thought. Samkhya philosophy had already proposed such a notion centuries earlier, but Aurobindo rejected the materialistic tendencies of both Darwinism and Samkhya, and proposed an evolution of spirit rather than matter.

He rejects the Mayavada of Advaita Vedanta, and solves the problem of the linkage between the ineffable Brahman or Absolute and the world of multiplicity by positing a transitional hypostasis between the two, which he called The Supermind. The super mind is the active principle present in the transcendent Satchidananda; a unitary mind of which our individual minds and bodies are minuscule subdivisions.

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Sri Aurobindo rejected a traditional Indian thinking that rejecting the World as Maya and living as a renunciate was the only way to Moksha. He says that people can be enlightened while enjoying the World, by following all the main Yogas-Gyan, Bhakti, Karma, Tantra as one philosophy, which he called Purna or Integral Yoga.

Discovering the Hidden Meaning of the Vedas: One of the most significant contributions of Sri Aurobindo to Hinduism was his discovery of the Esoteric meaning of the Vedas. Rig Veda is considered by some to be a book written by barbaric culture worshipping violent Gods. Aurobindo realised that this was due to the biased view of Westerners who had some preconceived views on Hindu culture.

So Aurobindo decided to look for hidden meanings in the Vedas. He looked at the Rig Veda as a psychological book, inspiring the people to move towards God, but in hidden language. So Indra is the God of Indriya, or the senses (Look, touch, hear, taste etc.). Varun means air, but in esoteric terms means Pran, or the Life force. So when the Rig Vedas says "Call Indra and Varun to drink Soma Rasa" they mean use the Senses and Pran to receive divine bliss(Soma means wine of Gods, but in several texts also means Divine Bliss, as in Right handed Tantra).

Agni, or God of Fire, is the hidden Divine Spark in us, which we have to fan, so it grows and engulfs our whole body. So the sacrifice of the Vedas could mean sacrificing ones ego to the internal Agni, or Divine spark.

These essays originally appeared in the Arya, but have been condensed as a book form as "The Secret of the Vedas" by Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo's Evolutionary Philosophy: These philosophical and cosmological themes are applied to Sri Aurobindo's vision of cosmic and human evolution. He argues that mankind as an entity is not the last rung in the evolutionary scale, but can evolve spiritually beyond its current limitations, moving out of an essential Ignorance born of creation, to a future state of Supramental existence. This would be a Divine Life on Earth characterised by knowledge, truth, substance and energy of supramental consciousness.

There are interesting parallels between Sri Aurobindo's vision and that of Teilhard de Chardin.

Involution: Sri Aurobindo's cosmology (described in his opus *The Life Divine*) explains the cosmos as coming about through the Absolute dividing into Existence, *i.e.* it existed; Consciousness-Force, *i.e.* It is a force and it is conscious of its existence; and Delight, *i.e.* it delights in the awareness of Its existence. This triene extended to a fourth aspect, the Supramental power that enabled the Consciousness Force to divide into an essential energy at rest. This is the plane of Life. That energy/life then moved, taking shape first as matter, then animus of life, then mind (predominantly in man). In other words, the supramental is the power that organized the spirit into the forms of creation. It divides the Conscious-Force so that it could take shape as individual forms of creation. All existence is thus forms of the original Force/Energy.

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Process of Creation — The process of creation of the universe is the very same process by which an individual and any collective entity in the cosmos develops, grows, and evolves.

Purpose is Delight of Being — The universe created a universe in order to extend its own delight into the details of creation. When we discover our higher nature, that discovery results in the delight for which the Absolute enabled the cosmos.

Ignorance to Knowledge Enables Delight — The universe was born of ignorant forms. In discovering the highest consciousness, one moves from Ignorance to Knowledge, experiencing the delight of being for which the universe was created.

Reason for Ignorance — All forms were born of an inconsonance, unconsciousness, and Ignorance. It was so because it allowed for the greatest multiplicity and possibility of forms, which would enable the greatest possibility for delight in discovery of its highest nature.

Evolution: The process of the universe emerging from the Absolute is referred in *The Life Divine* as involution. The subsequent process of life emerging from matter and mind from life is evolution. Each level that emerges in the evolution (matter, then the vital, then the mind) is already involved in the previous level, including the spirit in the deepest part of each. (The planes of Spirit/Supermind, Mind, and Life emerged in the descent of the Involution from out of the Conscious-Force, and then were involved, *i.e.* hidden in the evolution, where they reemerge in the universe after matter is created, through the emergence of animus of life and then mind and then spirit/super mind.)

The process of the evolution is to unfold in the universe the involved planes, and do so at levels of perfection and ultimate possibility, culminating in the supramentalization, spiritualization of everything in creation. It is also to reunite the Consciousness (lost in the Involution) with the (unconscious) Force (which is there in creation) by bringing the Spiritual Being into the Becoming of life, enabling a Divine life on earth, at each point aided by the supramental unifying action.

Evolution is described as a dual movement; inward, away from the surface consciousness and into the depths, culminating in the Psychic Being (the personal evolving soul); and then upward to higher levels of spiritual mind (Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, and Overmind), culminating in the final stage of superalimentation.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga: The metaphysical teaching is balanced by a practical method, called Integral Yoga.

Integral Yoga is so-called because it involves the synthesis of the three yogas-bhakti, karma, and jnana-of the Bhagavad Gita. It is also called "Integral" because it embodies and integrates all aspects of life.

Of these three, bhakti is central, and in keeping with the Hindu tradition of the Divine Mother, Sri Aurobindo teaches devotion to the Mother, personified in his co-worker *Mirra*

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Richard, henceforth called 'The Mother'. In his letters to his disciples, advises them to consecrates every action to the Mother, and surrender to Her and the Divine Force expressed through Her.

In his essay "The Mother" Sri Aurobindo describes the yoga as consisting of three essential movements. Aspiration for the Divine in one's life, Rejection of all wanting elements of the individual person (physical, vital, and mental), and Surrender to the Divine Spirit and Force through the Divine Mother.

Though he provided this approach to yoga, he also subscribed to the idea that all of life is an adventure of consciousness, and that there are no exact fixed approaches for a particular individual. Each person must start from where he is at, and move upward from there, through the adventure of self-discovery.

This process of transformation is three-fold. The individual moves upward (along a vertical scale) in his conciousness, centering more at the mental and then the spiritually oriented levels of mind, as well as moving inward (in the horizontal scale) to the soul. The more he moves inward, the further upward he moves, and the more each of the existing planes in the vertical scale (physical, vital, mental) are perfected.

In the final stage, the dualistic mind is replaced with the unitary super mind consciousness. Beyond that, according to the later experiences of The Mother (see *Mother's Agenda*) is the replacement of our current physical attributes (*e.g.* breathing, digestion, blood circulation, skeletal system, human form, etc.) with more subtler forms of substance of the body. The Mother's preoccupation was with this stage of the supramental evolution of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. A new species of supramentalized being replacing the current human functioning is the ultimate state of the (supramental) yoga.

As a result of these process, there emerges Gnostic, Supramentalized individuals who are the forerunners of an emerging Divine Life on earth, in which all of life moves to its highest spiritual and supramental status.

Sri Aurobindo's Influence: Sri Aurobindo lived at a very crucial moment in the history of thought when Marxist materialism, Nietzschean individualism and Freudian vitalism were popular and fashionable. Besides, phenomenology and existentialism had their run along-side him. On the whole, along with the new-fangled science and Theosophy, these new philosophical formulations fermented enough confusion among the elite. In a way, the disparate positions arrived at in Western thought find their synthesis in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. By aligning them with the ancient Indian wisdom, he comes up with an integral vision that breathes universality as well as contemporarily.

Thus, Kant's sublime, Hegel's absolute, Schopenhauer's will, Kierkegaard's passion, Marx's matter, Darwin's evolution, Nietzsche's overman, Bergson's lan vital, all find their due representation in Sri Aurobindo's grand exposition. His thought successfully overarchs cultural as well as religious chasms. S. K. Maitra and Haridas Chaudhuri are first among the academicians to discern the import of Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy. D.P.

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Chattopadhyay wrote a seminal treatise juxtaposing Sri Aurobindo and Marx to examine their utopian prophecies.

Sri Aurobindo's ideas about the further evolution of human capabilities influenced the thinking of Michael Murphy (who stayed at Sri Aurobindo's Ashram in India for eighteen months) – and indirectly, the human potential movement, through Murphy's writings. The American philosopher Ken Wilber, although influenced by Aurobindo, has tried to reduce the reliance on metaphysics in Aurobindo's thought; Wilber's interpretation has been strongly criticised by Rod Hemsell. New Age writer Andrew Harvey also looks to Aurobindo as a major inspiration. Cultural historian William Irwin Thompson is also heavily influenced by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Esoteric cosmologist Patrizia Norelli-Bachelet controversially claims that she is an integral part of the avataric line initiated by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, calling herself "The Third". These claims are not taken seriously by any followers or students of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, apart from those few students of Norelli-Bachelet herself.

Quotations

- "They proved to me by convincing reasons that God doen not exist; Afterwards I saw God, for he came and embraced me. And now what am I to believe-the reasoning of others or my own experience? Truth is what the soul has seen and experienced; the rest is appearance, prejudice and opinion."-*From the Hour of God*
- "The one aim of [my] yoga is an inner self-development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the One Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinize human nature."
- "Threefold are those supreme births of this divine force that is in the world, they are true, they are desirable; he moves there wide–overt within the Infinite and shines pure, luminous and fulfilling.... Of that which is in mortal in mortals, and possessed of the truth, is a God and established inwardly as an energy working out in our divine powers.... Become high uplifted, O Strength, pierce all veils, manifest in as the things of the Godhead."
- "Hidden nature is secret God" — *The Life Divine*

Ramana Maharshi

Ramana Maharshi (December 30, 1879 – April 14, 1950) was a Hindu mystic of the Advaita Vedanta stream, who lived on Arunachala hill near Tiruvannamalai. Dozens of contemporary Satsang teachers in the West claim him to be their Satguru. The core of his teachings was the practice of *atma-vichara* (self-enquiry). Ramana Maharshi was born in a village called Tirucculi near Madurai in southern India. He was given the name Venkataraman. After his father had died when Venkataraman was twelve, he went to live with his uncle in Madurai, where he briefly attended the American Missioan experience that was to change his life:

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It was in 1896, about 6 weeks before I left Madurai for good (to go to Tiruvannamalai-Arunachala) that this great change in my life took place. I was sitting alone in a room on the first floor of my uncle's house. I seldom had any sickness and on that day there was nothing wrong with my health, but a sudden violent fear of death overtook me. There was nothing in my state of health to account fr it nor was there any urge in me to find out whether there was any account for the fear. I just felt I was going to die and began thinking what to o about it. It did not occur to me to consult a doctor or any elders or friends. I felt I had to solve the problem myself then and there.

The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: "Now death has come; what does it mean? What is that called dying? This body dies." And at once I dramatised the occurrence of death. I lay with my limbs stretched out still as though rigor mortis has set in, and imitated a corpse so as to give greater reality to the enquiry. I held my breath and kept my lips tightly closed so that no sound could escape, and that neither the word "I" nor any word could be uttered. "Well then," I said to myself, this body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burn and reduced to ashes. But with the death of the body, am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert, but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of I within me, apart from it. So I am the Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit. All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truths which I perceived directly almost without thought process. "I" was something real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with the body was centered on that "I". From that moment onwards, the "I" or Self focussed attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death vanished once and for all. The ego was lost in the flood of Self awareness. Absorption continued in the Self continued unbroken from that time. Other thought might come and go like the various notes of music, but the "I" continued like the fundamental shruthi [that which is heard] note which underlies and blends with all other notes.

Venkataraman stayed at the family home for two months after his 'death experience', but after his brother remarked on his intense introspection he secretly left the family home and travelled to the sacred mountain of Arunachala, at the town of Tiruvannamalai, Madras Province (now Tamil Nadu). He stayed at Arunachala for the rest of his life.

Teachings: Ramana Maharshi taught a method called "Atma-Vichara" or "self-inquiry" in which the seeker focuses continuous attention on the "I-thought" in order to find its source. In the beginning this would require effort, said Ramana, but eventually something

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deeper than the "small self" would take over and the mind would dissolve in what he called the "heart center". This was possible Ramana claimed, because the human personality is but a mental idea.

He is an acknowledged Hindu master of the Advaita Vedanta stream, and has followers throughout India and abroad. This system of philosophy endorses the view that the "true being" within each human is the ultimate, "sublime reality", the Brahman, the "one without a second" or simply the Self. What prevents humans from realizing this, so the teachings of Advaita, is the identification with the mind and the body. therefore, these identifications-which make up the "ego"-must be transcended in order to realize the truth. However, from the Vedanta perspective, 'realize the truth' is a bit of a misnomer, because the Self, in Vedanta thought already is the truth, already is free. One need merely remove the false veil of wrong identification with the body and mind to see this.

Ramana recommended his followers to go back to the "source from wherein all thought arises" and for example ask themselves, "to whom is this thought?" or "to whom has this anger arisen?" The answer would be obviously "to me"; after that, they were asked to enquire as to "who am I?". Ramana Maharishi would also suggest the question "whence am I?" which some of his devotees consider to be more important than "who am I?". In this way they would try to trace the "I-thought" back to the "source". The word "source" in this context is used synonymous of the words "God" or "Self". Another often used teaching of Ramana's is: "Stay in silence." Many spiritual western authors, including the American philosopher Ken Wilber, claim to have been influenced by Ramana Maharshi's nondual approach. In fact, Ken Wilber is said to have called Ramana Maharshi "the greatest sage of the 20th Century". Journalist Paul Brunton was one of the first Westerners to write about Ramana Maharshi. His book "A Search in Secret India" was written in the 1930's and has made Ramana popular in Europe and America.

Teachers in the Tradition: Several followers of Ramana Maharshi became teachers in their own right, and have subsequently spawned their own successors as well, including H. W. L. Poonja, Lakshmana Swamy, and Annamalai Swami. Western followers of Ramana Maharshi include Robert Adams, Paul Brunton, A. Ramana (AHAM), Nome (Society of Abidance in Truth), Neelam (Fire of Truth Satsanga), Gangaji, Eli Jaxon-Bear, Catherine Ingram, and Isaac Shapiro.

Swami Sivananda

Swami Sivananda Saraswati (Sep 8, 1887—Jul 14, 1963), as he is known under his monastic name, was born Kuppuswamy in Pattamadai, Tamil Nadu, India. A Hindu by birth, he is a well-known proponent of yoga and vedanta. He is reputed to have written over 300 books, on these and related subjects, during his life. He went to medical school in Tanjore and worked as a doctor in Malaya.

In 1923 he left Malaya for India on an extensive pilgrimage. At Banaras, he had the Darshan (vision) of Lord Vishvanath. Dr. Kuppuswami next went to Rishikesh where met

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his guru, Swami Vishwananda Saraswati. It was Vishwananda who initiated him into the Sannyas order and gave him his monastic name. However, since Swami Sivananda spent only a few hours with Swami Vishwananda, the full Viraja Homa ceremonies were performed later by Swami Vishnudevananda, the Mahant of Sri Kailas Ashram. Sivananda performed austerities for many years but he also continued to help the sick. With some money from his insurance policy that had matured, he started a charitable dispensary at Lakshmanjula in 1927. He later created the *Sivananda Ayurvedic Pharmacy* in 1945.

Sivananda traveled the length and breadth of India during his Parivrajaka (wandering monk) life. He visited important places of pilgrimage in the south, including Rameshvaram. He conducted sankirtian and delivered lectures. He visited the Sri Aurobindo ashram and met Maharishi Suddhananda Bharati. At the Ramana ashram, he allegedly had the darshan of Ramana Maharshi on Maharshi's birthday. He sang bhajans and danced in ecstasy with Maharshi's bhaktas. He also went on pilgrimages to Kailas-Manasarovar and Badri. He returned to Rishikesh and in 1936 founded the new religious movement the Divine Life Society on the bank of the holy Ganges River. The free distribution of spiritual literature drew a steady flow of disciples to the Swami, including the young U.G. Krishnamurti, who studied with him for seven summers, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, founder of Satyananda Yoga.

Swami Sivananda organized the All-world Religions Federation in 1945 and established the All-world Sadhus Federation in 1947. He called his *yoga* the *Yoga of Synthesis*. On the 14th of July 1963, the Great Soul Swami Sivananda entered Mahasamadhi (departure of a Self-realized saint from his mortal coil) in his Kutir on the bank of Ganga, in Shivanandanagar.

Sivananda Yoga

After ten years of service to his Master Swami Vishnu-devananda was sent to the West to spread the teachings of yoga and vedanta and set up the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres and Ashrams. *People are waiting* were the words of his Master.

Chinmayananda

Swami Chinmayananda (May 8, 1916-Aug 3, 1993) was born Balakrishna Menon (Balan) in Ernakulam, Kerala in a devout Hindu noble family called *"Poothampilil"*. Graduating from Lucknow University, he entered the field of journalism where he felt he could influence political, economic and social reform in India. But his life was changed when he met Swami Sivananda at Rishikesh and became interested in the Hindu spiritual path. Balakrishna Menon took sanyas (monkhood) from Swami Sivananda to become Swami Chinmayananda-the one who is saturated in Bliss and Consciousness. Swami Shivananda saw the potential in Swami Chinmayananda and sent him to study under a guru in the Himalayas-Swami Tapovan Maharaj under whom he studied for 12 years. At the end of the education he decided to spread his teaching all over the world.

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During his forty years of travelling and teaching, Gurudev opened numerous centres and ashrams worldwide, he also built many schools, hospitals, nursing homes and clinics. As well as reinvigorating India's rich cultural heritage, Swami Chinmayananda made Vedanta accessible to everybody regardless of age, nationality, or religious background.

Swami Chinmayananda died on 3 August 1993 in San Diego, California. His admirers regard him as having attained Mahasamadhi at that point. His work has resulted in the creation of an international organization called the *Chinmaya Mission*.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001), affectionately known as Gurudeva by his followers, was born Robert Hansen in Oakland, California on January 5, 1927. He established a Hindu monastery in Kauai, Hawaii and founded the magazine *Hinduism Today*. He also authored many books and was one of the most prominent faces of Hinduism during the last two decades of the 20th century. He was the founder and leader of the Saiva Siddhanta Church, world's first hindu church. He was one of Saivism's most orthodox and revered Gurus and a Westerner who adopted Saivism as a young man. Saivism is a Hindu denomination that considers Shiva to be the supreme God, which is a belief contrasted with Smartism, another influential Hindu denomination which considers Shiva to be one of the personal forms of God.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami is recognized worldwide as one of Hinduism's foremost ministers. In 1947, as a young man of 20, he journeyed to India and Sri Lanka and two years later was initiated into sannyasa by the renowned siddha yogi and worshiper of Siva, Jnanaguru Yogaswami of Sri Lanka, regarded as one of the 20th century's most remarkable mystics.

For over five decades Subramuniyaswami, affectionately known as Gurudeva by followers, taught Hinduism to Hindus and seekers from all faiths. In the line of successorship, he was considered the 162nd *Jagadacharya* of the *Nandinatha Sampradaya's Kailasa Parampara* and Guru Mahasannidhanam of Kauai Aadheenam (also known as Kauai's Hindu Monastery), a 458 acre (1.9 km^2) temple-monastery complex on Hawaii's Garden Island. From this verdant Polynesian ashram on a river bank near the foot of an extinct volcano, Gurudeva's successor, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, and the monastics live their cherished vision, following a contemplative and joyous existence, building a jewel-like white granite Siva temple, meditating together in the hours before dawn, then working to promote the Sanatana Dharma together through four areas of service: 'Saiva Siddhanta Church', 'Himalayan Academy', Hindu Heritage Endowment and the 'Hinduism Today' international monthly magazine.

Gurudeva was lauded as one of the strictest and most traditional gurus in the world. His Hindu church nurtures its membership and local missions on five continents. The Academy serves, personally and through its magazine, books, courses and travel/study programs, serious seekers and Hindus of all denominations. Gurudeva's mission, received

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from his satguru, was to protect, preserve and promote the Saivite Hindu religion as expressed through its three pillars: temples, satgurus and scripture. That mission is now carried forward by his monastic and family communities. The congregation of Saiva Siddhanta Church is a disciplined, global fellowship of family initiates, monastics and students who follow the sadhana marga, the path of inner effort, yogic striving and personal transformation. Gurudeva was the hereditary guru of 2.5 million Sri Lankan Hindus. His various institutions form a Jaffna-Tamil-based organization which has branched out from his Sri Subramuniya Ashram in Alaveddy to meet the needs of the growing Hindu diaspore of this century. He also established a seven acre (28,000 m^2) monastery in Mauritius, which includes a public Spiritual Park. Gurudeva gently oversaw more than 50 independent temples worldwide. Missionaries and teachers within the family membership provide counseling and classes in Saivism for children, youth and adults.

'Hinduism Today' is an influential, award-winning, international monthly magazine founded by Gurudeva in 1979. It is a public service of his monastic order, created to strengthen all Hindu traditions by uplifting and informing followers of the Sanatana Dharma everywhere. Gurudeva was author of more than 30 books unfolding unique and practical insights on Hindu metaphysics, mysticism and yoga. His Master Course lessons on Saivism, taught in many schools, are preserving the teachings among thousands of youths. Hindu Heritage Endowment is a public service trust founded by Gurudeva in 1995. It seeks to establish and maintain permanent sources of income for Hindu institutions worldwide. In 1986, New Delhi's World Religious Parliament named Gurudeva one of five modern-day Jagadacharyas, world teachers, for his international efforts in promoting and chronicling a Hindu renaissance.

Then in 1995 the title of Dharmachakra was bestowed on him for his publications. The Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders for Human Survival chose Subramuniyaswami as a Hindu representative at its conferences. Thus, at Oxford, England, in 1988, Moscow in 1990 and Rio de Janiero in 1992, he joined hundreds of religious, political and scientific leaders from all countries to discuss privately, for the first time, the future of human life on this planet. At Chicago's centenary Parliament of the World's Religions in September, 1993, Gurudeva was elected one of three presidents, along with Swami Chidananda Saraswati of the Rishikesh-based Divine Life Society and Kerala's Mata Amritanandamayi, to represent Hinduism at the prestigious Presidents' Assembly, a core group of 25 men and women voicing the needs of world faiths.

In 1996 Gurudeva upgraded the newspaper 'Hinduism Today' to a magazine, a quantum leap that placed it on newsstands everywhere, alongside Newsweek, Time and India Today. In 1997 he responded to the US President's call for religious opinions on the ethics of cloning from the Hindu point of view. Later that year, he spearheaded the 125th anniversary of Satguru Yogaswami and his golden icon's diaspore pilgrimage through many of the over 75 Sri Lanka temples and societies around the globe. In 1998, the Vishva Hindu Parishad of Kerala sent an envoy to Kauai to honor and recognize Gurudeva as

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the "Hindu Voice of the Century." In the last few years of his life Gurudeva was a key member of *Vision Kauai 2020*, a small group of community leaders that includes the Mayor, former Mayor and County Council members. They met on a monthly basis to fashion the island's future for twenty years ahead, based on moral and spiritual values.

In April of 1999 Gurudeva led 45 spiritual aspirants on an Innersearch from Vancouver to Anchorage, Alaska. Their ship, the MS Narcoma, journeyed for 7 days and nights as they studied meditation and the mystical life together, explored the glaciers and redefined the cruise experience along the way. In Anchorage, Gurudeva founded the first Hindu temple in that state, calling together the native American Indian leaders to participate in the event. He also initiated a powerful series of book signings in California, Washington and Alaska, introducing his newest book, Merging with Siva, to thousands of seekers.

In August he traveled to Malaysia and Mauritius, where he met with the nation's leaders on several family-related topics, opened his Spiritual Park for 3,000 special guests, spent time with his Church members and continued the dynamic book signing, this time adding his newest book, Weaver's Wisdom, to the list.

In March and April of 2000 he led another Innersearch Travel-Study program to the Caribbean, visiting six nations with 53 of his devotees and meeting the Hindu leadership in that remote part of the world, with special events among 4,500 Hindus who came to honor him in Trinidad.

In August of 2001 Gurudeva took 72 devotees on a journey through Northern Europe, founding new Hindu temples along the way and visiting the Tamil communities in a dozen nations. Just before departing for the European Innersearch, he completed his last book, Living with Siva. Only weeks after returning from that dynamic odyssey, he died.

Gurudeva was known to the end for spending personal time with new members, island visitors who pilgrimaged to his sacred home on Kauai and new young monks who have come to the monastery to give their life in selfless service and the search for God within man. All of his work and mission, his vision and projects now go forward under the guidance of his successor, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami.

Books: Gurudeva has written several books on Hinduism, Saivism, yoga and meditation; his works are highly regarded by many contemporary Hindu leaders. His **Master Course** is Gurudeva's most monumental work, a comprehensive treatise on every aspect of Saivism in three books and more than 3,000 pages, composed in what he called "talkanese"-a flowing version of written English that resembles the spoken language and evokes ancient Hindu oral traditions.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan

Bhagwan Swaminarayan (April 2, 1781-1830) was born Ghanshyam Pande to a Brahmin family in the village of Chhapaiya, Uttar Pradesh, India. His father's name was Hariprasad Pande (also known as Dharmadev) and his mother's name was Premvati (also known as

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Bhaktimata). He had two brothers, Rampratapji Pande, the older brother, and Icharamji Pande, the younger brother. After serving his parents, he left home at the age of 11 to travel over 8,000 miles throughout India on a holy pilgrimage for 7 years, 1 month, and 11 days. During his travels, Ghanshyam was given the name Neelkanth, another name for Lord Shiva, for the intensive tapas, meditation, and yoga he performed. In many instances, yogis, rishis and sadhus were attracted to his figure in awe, for they had never before seen such a young renunciant who is so advanced in the art of meditation.

To dispel the perceived misinterpretation and malpractice that had befallen Hindu practice in the 19th century, he travelled across the length and breadth of India in search for an Ashram or sampradaya (following) that practiced a correct understanding of Vedanta, Samkhya, Yoga, and Pancaratra — the four primary schools of Hinduism. He would measure the various yogis' understanding of the scriptures by asking the following five questions and assessing their responses: "What is the nature of jiva? What is the nature of Ishwar? What is the nature of Maya? What is the nature of Brahman? What is the nature of Parabrahman?" His journey as a profound yogi eventually concluded in Gujarat, where Swami Muktananda, a senior monk-disciple of a highly respected Vaishnav guru Swami Ramananda, answered the five questions with astounding sophistication.

Neelkanth was pleased to see a pure understanding of the essence of Hindu thought and practice as well as an ashrama that was strict in abiding by the laws of Dharma, and so he decided to stay to get an opportunity to meet and become a disciple of Swami Ramananda.

Neelkanth's profound understanding of the metaphysical and epistemological concepts of the Pancha-Tattvas (five eternal entities as outlined above) combined with the level of his mental and physical discipline inspired even the senior sadhus of Swami Ramananda. At age 21, he was given the headship of the religious sect known as *Uddhav Sampraday* (later known as Swaminarayan Sampradaya), with the blessings of his Guru Sadguru Ramanand Swami. He later became known as *Bhagwan Swaminarayan* after the mantra he taught. Although the name that was given by his Guru Swami Ramananda at the time of initiation into the monk order was Swami Sahajananda, he become commonly known as Bhagwan Swaminarayan, or *Shreeji Maharaj* or *Shri Hari*.

The profound personality of Bhagwan Swaminarayan transformed a significant portion of Gujarat, Saurashtra, and even parts of Rajasthan into people of all castes, creeds, and ashramas developing a pure understanding of spirituality and shedding the false conceptions of the scriptures that had led to a long-standing practice of superstitions, violence, and killing of animals in Vedic yagnas. Lord Swaminarayan, as a hallmark of his philosophy of temple theism and idol worship, constructed nine magnificent menders in: Ahmedabad, Bhuj, Muli, Vadtal, Junagadh, Dholera, Dholka, Gadhpur & Jetalpur – installing images of various manifestations of God, such as NarNarayan Dev, LaxmiNarayan Dev, Radha Krishna, Radha Raman, Revti Baldevji, etc. Lord Swaminarayan made Gadhpur his home,

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in recognition of the exceptional devoted love from Dada Khachar, one of his most devoted disciples.

Lord Swaminarayan's philosophical, social, and practical teachings are contained in the Vachanamrut, a collection of 271 dialogues which were recorded with precision by five of his disciples verbatim to His spoken words. As a result, the Vachanamrut is shared by the entire Swaminarayan Sampradaya to be the most central scripture to attain a comprehensive knowledge of dharma (moral conduct), jnan (understanding of the nature of the atman), vairagya (mental and physical detachment from material pleasure or maya), and bhakti (pure, selfless devotion to God) — the four essentialities for a jiva to attain the state of Brahman and become a perfect disciple of God. As a commentary to the practice and understanding of Dharma, Lord Swaminarayan composed the Shikshapatri, a small booklet containing 212 Sanskrit hymns that outline the basic tenets of Dharma that all disciples should follow to live a well-disciplined and moral life.

Historically, the movement that Lord Swaminarayan started can be seen to have a significant effect in the state of affairs of Gujarat and Rajasthan, for the amount of social work He conducted can be seen as one of the major factors leading to the stabilization of Gujarat during the 19th century, a time where the British Empire and the Muslims of the north were gaining a stronger foothold. The advent of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya is arguably the strongest influence in 19th century India to provide a resurgence of Hindu philosophy and practice, defying significant outside influence and a widespread misinterpretation and malpractice of the Hindu texts, injecting a strong ideal of non-violence, religious and cultural tolerance, and simply developing a pure love for God. The abolition of the prejudice and segregation that had resulted from the caste system is another hallmark of Lord Swaminarayan's social work to reach out to all people and open the gateway of spiritual discipline and participation in the congregation (which Swaminarayan referred to as Satsang). Thus, Lord Swaminarayan, through his profoundly attractive personality, was able to transform the inherited Uddhav Sampradaya from his Guru Swami Ramananda into a massive fellowship that some historians estimate attracted up to two million followers and over 2,000 men and women by 1820 C.E. to follow the path of renunciation and celibacy to join the monk order.

The advent of almighty God in the form of Swaminarayan Bhagwan is claimed to have ben forecast in ancient Vedic scriptures by followers. Many doubts are raised as to how Swaminarayan Bhagwan can be considered Bhagwan or God.

The world's first Swaminarayan Temple was built in Ahmedabad by the instructions of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan was a Narayan and Krishna bhakta considered by his followers to be Narayan himself, Rama, Krishna, etc. being his avataras. Swaminarayan sampraday stems from the Ramanuja sampraday, which holds Lord Narayan to be supreme and Krishna to be an avatar.

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In his main work called Shikshapatri (108) he writes:

"Sa Sri Krshnaha Param Brahma Bhagvaan Purushotamaha Upasya Ishtadevo Naha Sarvaavirbhaav Kaaranam"

That ishvara is Shi Krishna who is PraBrahma Bhagwan Purushottam and our most cherished deity (istadev). He is worthy of being worshipped by us all (upasya). He is the cause of all manifestations and incarnations.

Fundamentals of the Swaminarayan Philosophy: Shree Hari is Shree NarNarayan Dev Himself:

- Dharma (Religion): Virtuous conduct as defined in the 'Shrities' and 'Smrities' (Holy Scriptures) be known as the Dharma.
- Bhakti (Devotion): Supreme fervour of the soul combined with the consciousness of the Glories of the Supreme be known as ' Bhakti'. Nothing other then Gods devotion can guide the enlighten vision of God to great deliverance.
- Jnana (Enlightenment): Correct awareness about the forms of the Soul, illusion, and God be known as 'Jnyana'.
- Vairagya (Renunciation): Detachment of the affection for all material possessions and be absolutely attached towards the love for the Eternal God is known as Vairagya.
- Maya (Illusion): It is considered 'Tri-Gunatmika' *i.e.* deceptive illusion prevails in all the three qualities of minds *viz.* Satva, Rajas and Tamas; To be possessed by Maya is to be caught in darkness; God is the Lord of maya who acts as the power of God; It breeds ego in one for his body and for the relatives of the body too.
- Mukti-Moksha (Great Deliverances): To worship God in knowing he is the Supreme Deity and reaching ultimate salvation.
- Atman (Self): The innate physiology of the subtle Self that is imperceptible by the human senses. Recognition of the Atman, after which one experiences a transcendental bliss, is achieved through bhakti-yoga as outlined in the Bhagavad Gita, according to the teachings of Lord Swaminarayan. It is the source of energy and is the real knower; It pervades the entire body and is the essence that differentiates matter and life; in character it is inseparable, impenetrable, indestructible and immortal.
- Paramatman (The Supreme Soul): It is omnipresent within the souls, just as soul is present in the body; it is independent and is the one whom rewards the Fala (fruits) to the souls. It is the source of infinite material universes and the First Cause. It has no prior causes, and is the inherent cause of all effects (*i.e.* law of causality or the Hindu concept of karma). S. Radhakrishnan, a renowned Hindu scholar, writes "The Supreme is described as a kavi, a poet, an artist, a maker or creator, not a mere imitator...even as art reveals man's wealth of life, so does the world reveal the immensity of God's life," (p. 86, The Principal Upanishads).

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That Paramatman is believed by followers of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya to have manifested as Lord Swaminarayan.

Prior to Bhagwan Swaminarayan departing for Akshardham, Shriji Hari divided his menders into two regions and in Vadtal, he established the dual Acharyaship, in direct succession to himself. He did so by means of a legal document Desh Vibhag Lekh which is a scripture that was dictated to Shuk Swami on Maghshar Sud 15, Vikram Samvat 1883 and witnessed by elder saints and satsangis of the Sampraday. The Lekh serves two primary purposes:

1. Demarcation of the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the respective Gadis
2. Means of appointing future Acharyas.

The concept of having a householder (non-monk) as guru and that of hereditary succession are unique to the Shree Swaminarayan Sampraday. It is the uniqueness of the Swaminarayan Sampraday, that the closest a tyagi (saint) comes to leadership is being appointed the Mahant Swami (head-saint) of a Shikharbandh Temple. At all times, the true saints of the Sampraday take their instructions from the Acharya, their ultimate guru and leader.

Additionally, Swaminarayan put an emphasis on association with enlightened Sadhus (also called "Saints" by followers). These Sadhus are viewed as spiritual guides on the path to enlightenment. The Vachanamrut details the specific attributes of an enlightened Sadhu, or Ekantik Sadhu, and explains that such a saint has his mind constantly attuned to the divine form of God, is totally detached from material pleasure (nishkami), bodily attachment (nisnehi), covetousness (nirlobhi),and ultimately ego (nirmani). Such a saint offers selfless devotion to God while desiring nothing but the spiritual, moral and social stabilization of the disciples. The devotees of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha believe that such a Saint Lord Swaminarayan speaks of is Pramukh Swami Maharaj, a spiritual guide who incorporates extensive social work with moral and intellectual development.

Swami Prabhupada

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (September 1, 1896–November 14, 1977) was born Abhay Charan De, in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. He studied at the Scottish Churches College, Calcutta, which was then administered by the British. In his later years, as a Vaishnava sadhu, he became an influential communicator of Gaudiya Vaishnava theology to India and specifically to the West through his founding of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (popularly called "Hare Krishna") in 1966. He has been described as a charismatic leader (in the sense used by sociologist Max Weber), and was successful in acquiring followers in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere.

Before adopting the life of a vanaprastha, or pious renunciant, in 1950, he was married with children and owned a small pharmaceutical business. He later took sannyasa (a vow of renunciation) in 1959.

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Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura

In 1922, when Prabhupada first met his spiritual master, Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura (1874–1937), Sri Bhaktisiddhanta requested that Prabhupada spread the message of Lord Chaitanya in the English language. In 1933 Prabhupada became a formally initiated disciple. In 1944 Prabhupada started *Back to Godhead,* an English language fortnightly, for which he acted as publisher, editor and copy editor. In 1947 the Gaudiya Vaisnava Society recognised Prabhupada's scholarship with the honorific *Bhaktivedanta,* indicating devotion (Bhakti) and conclusive knowledge (Vedanta). Beginning in 1950 he lived at the medieval temple of Radha-Damodara in the holy city of Vrindavan, where he began his translation work on the Sanskrit epic Srimad Bhagavatam. His Divine Grace Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura had always encouraged Prabhupada, "If you have any money, print the books!", referring to Srimad Bhagavatam, Bhagavad Gita, Chaitanya Caritamrta, and other fundamental works.

Sannyasa: He took *sannyasa* (renunciant) vows in 1959 from his god brother Sri Bhakti Prajnana Keshava Maharaja at Mathura, following which he single-handedly published the first three volumes of his thirty-volume translation of the 18,000-verse Bhagavata Purana and the commentary on it. He then left India to fulfill his master's spiritual mission. In his possession were a suitcase, an umbrella, a supply of dry cereal, about seven dollars worth of Indian currency, and several boxes of books.

Mission to the West

Sri Prabhupada in the West: Prabhupada sailed to New York City in 1965. By July 1966 he had brought Hare Krishna to the West, founding the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in New York City. Sri Prabhupada became well known as one who truly practiced what he preached; leading by example he expanded the movement from a small group of people in New York in 1966, to an international movement incorporating many thousands of people. By the time of his death in Vrindavan eleven years later (1977), ISKCON was a widely known expression of Hinduism in the West.

Through his mission, Prabhupada followed and communicated the teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and introduced bhakti yoga to a Western audience.

Reactions to Prabhupada's Death: Prabhupada spent much of the last decade of his life setting up the institution of ISKCON. Since he was the Society's leader, his personality and management were responsible for much of ISKCON's growth and the reach of his mission.

Upon Prabhupada's death on November 14, 1977, eleven of his disciples became initiating gurus for ISKCON. Those chosen were Tamal Krishna Goswami, Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, Jayapataka Swami, Hridayananda Goswami, Bhavananda Goswami, Hamsaduta Swami, Ramesvara Swami, Harikesa Swami, Bhagavan dasa Adhikari, Kirtanananda Swami, and Jayatirtha dasa Adhikari. Of these eleven, only the first four have stayed within ISKCON.

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Since Prabhupada's death, ISKCON has been managed by the Governing Body Commission. Sri Prabhupada created this body to handle affairs in his absence concerning the daily management and spiritual standards for the organization and its members.

Views on other Religious Traditions: Prabhupada considered Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed to be empowered representatives of God. He considered them pioneers of the same essential message of dedication to God with love and devotion.

- "Actually, it doesn't matter – Krishna or Christ – the name is the same. The main point is to follow the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures that recommend chanting the name of God in this age." (from *The Science of Self-Realization,* ISBN 9171494472)

Respect in India: In 1996 the Government of India issued a commemorative postage stamp in Sri Prabhupada's honor.

In India ISKCON has become a highly respected organization. Sri Prabhupada has been honored by the Government and praised by the highest leaders of the country.

In 1996 the Government of India recognized Sri Prabhupada's accomplishments by issuing a commemorative stamp in his honor.

Speaking at the inauguration of ISKCON's cultural center in New Delhi in 1998, Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee, then India's prime minister, said:

> *"If the Bhagavad Gita, the holy text of the Hindu traditions, is printed in millions of copies and scores of languages and distributed in all nooks and corners of the world, the credit for this great sacred service goes chiefly to ISKCON. For this accomplishment alone, Indians should be eternally grateful to the devoted spiritual army of Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement, and to his followers. . . .*
>
> *"The arrival of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in the United States in 1965 and the particular popularity his movement gained in a very short span of twelve years must be regarded as one of the greatest spiritual events of the century."*

1. Bhagavad-gita As It Is (1968)
2. Sri Isopanisad (1969)
3. Srimad-Bhagavatam (1972-77) (multiple volumes)
4. Chaitanya-caritamrta (1974) (multiple volumes)
5. The Nectar of Instruction (1975)

Other works published within Prabhupada's lifetime

1. Beyond Illusion and Doubt (1967)
2. Easy Journey to Other Planets (1970)
3. Krishna Consciousness: The Topmost Yoga System (1970)
4. Beyond Birth and Death (1972)

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5. Perfection of Yoga (1972)
6. On The Way to Krishna (1973)
7. Raja Vidya: The King of Knowledge (1973)
8. Elevation to Krishna Consciousness (1973)
9. Krishna Consciousness: The Matchless Gift (1974)
10. Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers (1977)
11. Teachings of Lord Kapila (1977)
12. The Science of Self-Realization (1977)

Published Posthumously

1. Light of the Bhagavata (1977)
2. Teachings of Queen Kunti (1978)
3. Life Comes From Life (1978)
4. Krishna, The Reservoir of Pleasure (1979?)
5. Chant and Be Happy (1982)
6. Coming Back (1983?)
7. Narada-bhakti-sutra (1989?)
8. Path of Perfction (1989?)
9. Mukunda-mala-stotra (1989)
10. A Second Chance (1991)
11. Journey of Self Discovery (1991)
12. Laws of Nature: An Infallible Justice (1991)
13. Renunciation Through Wisdom (1992)
14. Quest for Enlightenment (1993?)
15. The Path of Yoga (1995)
16. Message of Godhead (1996?)
17. Civilization and Transcendence (1998)
18. Dharma: The Way of Transcendence (1998)
19. Introduction to Bhagavad-gita (2005)

Baba Lokenath Brahmachari

Baba Lokenath Brahmachari was born on Janmastami, the birthday of Lord Krishna, in 1730 (18th Bhadra,1137 bangabda) to a Brahmin family in the village of Chaurasi Chakla, a couple of miles from Kolkata. His father Ramnarayan Ghosal's one wish in life was to dedicate a child to the path of renunciation to liberate the family. So when the fourth son was born to his wife Kamaladevi, he knew that the time had come to initiate his boy to the service of God. He pleaded with Pandit Bhagawan Ganguly of the nearby

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village of Kochuya to be his son's guru and teach him the wisdom of the Shastras. At the age of 11, young Lokenath left home with his guru. He visited Kalighat Temple in Kolkata and then ived in the forests for 25 years, selflessly serving his master and practising the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali along with the most difficult Hatha Yoga. After this he travelled to the Himalayas where he meditated in the nude for nearly five decades. Finally, the attained enlightenment at the age of ninety.

After his enlightenment he traveled extensively on foot to Afghanistan, Persia, Arabia and Israel, making three pilgrimages to Mecca. When he came to the small town Baradi near Dhaka, a wealthy family built him a small hermitage, which became his ashram. He was at the time one hundred and thirty six years old. There he accepted the sacred thread of the Brahmins and clothed himself in saffron robes. For the rest of his life he performed miracles on and gave divine wisdom to all who came to him to seek his blessings.He received the title *Baba*(Bengali for Father).

On the 19th day of Jyestha, 1297 (1890), at 11:45 am, the Baba was meditating when he went into a trance with his eyes open, and while still meditation, left his physical body forever. He was aged 160. He had said before his death:

> *I am eternal, I am deathless. After this body falls, do not think that everything will come to an end. I will live in the hearts of all living beings in my subtle astral form. Whoever will seek my refuge, will always receive my Grace.*

Teachings: His teachings were infused with simplicity that endeared the common man. He preached love, devotion and unwavering faith in God and in one's deeper, immutable self. After attaining enlightenment he had said:

> *I have seen only My self. I am bound by my own karma. The materialistic world is bound by the tongue and the sex organ. He who can restrain these two is fit to attain enlightenment.*

Baba Lokenath is said to have been nearly seven feet tall with little flesh on him. He was an ascetic, denying him self physical pleasures. He could even negate sleep, never closing his eyes or even blinking.

Impact: Today, Lokenath Brahmachari is a household deity of millions of Bengali families on both sides of the Indo-Bangladesh border. He is regarded a saint among Hindus and is often deified as a living God.

An often repeated legend tells that Baba Lokenath was an avatar of Shiva, sent as a Messiah to redeem the world of sin.

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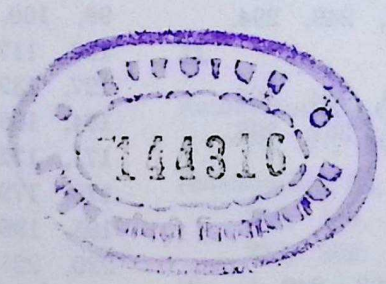

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